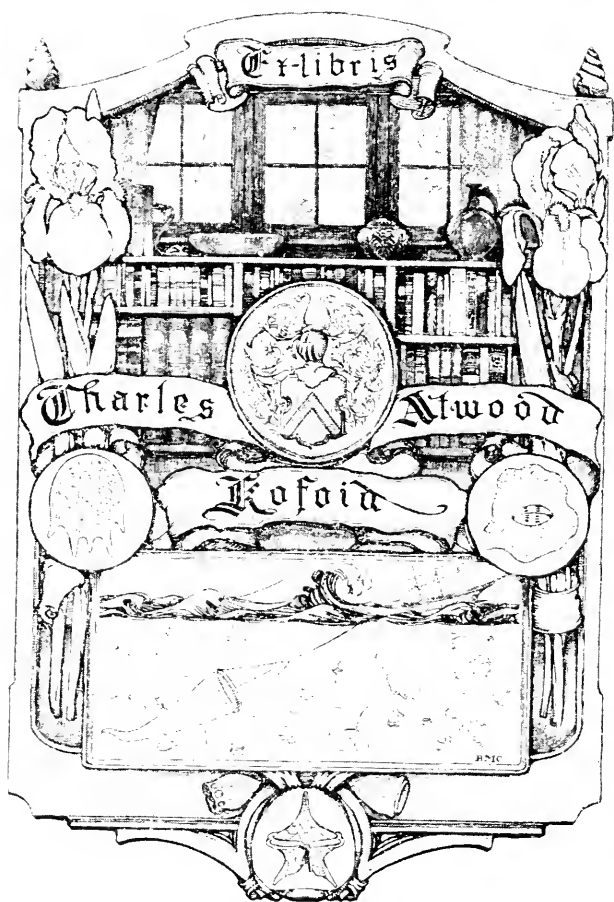


THE PEARL DIVER



GORDON STABLE
—M.D.R.N.—





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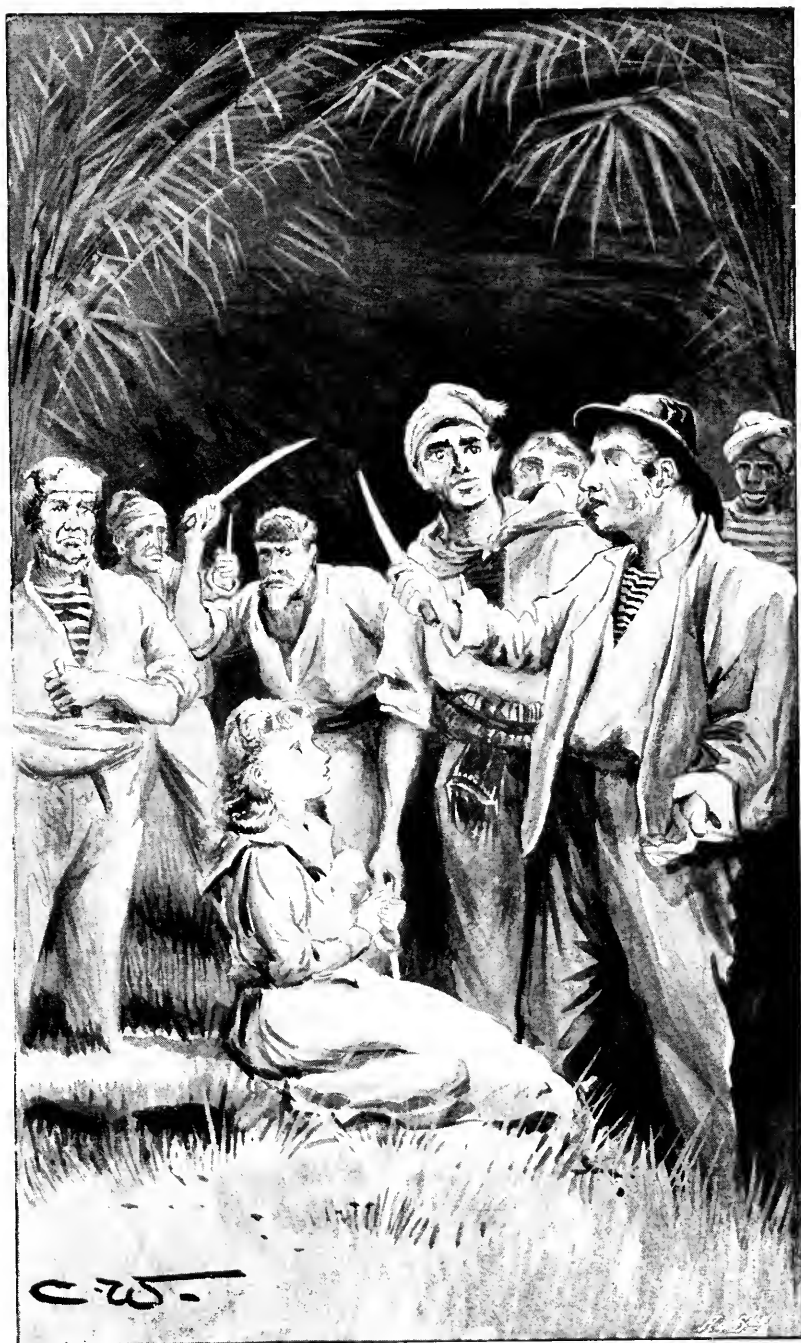
PRESENTED BY
PROF. CHARLES A. KOFOID AND
MRS. PRUDENCE W. KOFOID





Parley.

THE PEARL DIVERS



"If she dies, I die."

Frontispiece.

THE PEARL DIVERS

AND CRUSOES OF THE SARGASSO SEA

BY

GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M.
(SURGEON ROYAL NAVY)

AUTHOR OF

"THE CRUISE OF THE ROVER CARAVAN," "FROM PLOUGHSHARE TO PULPIT,"
"THE CRUISE OF THE SNOWBIRD," "FOR ENGLAND HOME
AND BEAUTY," ETC. ETC.

"And when the wind and storm had done,
A ship that had rode out the gale
Sank down without a signal gun,
And none was left to tell the tale.

"Peace be with those whose graves are made
Beneath the bright and silver sea."

LONGFELLOW

London

JAMES NISBET & CO., LIMITED
21 BERNERS STREET

1896

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
At the Ballantyne Press

TO
MY COUSIN NELLIE

WIFE OF DR. JOHN ROBERTSON

OF ABERDEEN

This Book

IS

DEDICATED WITH EVERY KINDLY WISH

BY

THE AUTHOR

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A WORD TO MY BOY READERS

“My soul is full of longing
For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great ocean
Sends a thrilling pulse through me.”

WHEN my own boy and girls, who call me “Daddy,” read any of my books at home—and I am proud to say they all do—a question almost invariably asked is: “But do tell us, is it all true?”

I answer as best I can.

Now, no tale in the world is ever “*all* true”: it would not be a story if it were, would it?

Nevertheless I have knocked about all over the world so much, and made so many notes and observations, that I have my imagination to fall back upon less often than if I had stayed by the fire-side all my life.

Now I want to tell you right away, that most of my people or heroes in this story have had their prototypes, and I have tried to paint them from the life.

The terrible Indian Mutiny was before my time

in the service. I was not there, but the weird little Antonio Garcia I met afterwards at Bombay and elsewhere, and his mysterious glass eye was precisely as I have tried to depict it.

We got on friendly terms, and he told me many of his strange adventures on sea and land, and among the Coral Isles of the South Pacific Ocean.

Davie Drake and Barclay Stuart are bold English boys of a type I have often met with, and dearly love.

Teenie, the wee fisher lassie, was a great favourite of mine down at D——, on the south coast; and many a strange, fairy story I have had to tell her, to command.

I have never met a wiser, funnier, or more daring lassie than my pet Teenie; nor a more honest deserving couple than her parents. Muffie the cat was a pussy of mine own, and a great traveller. The first mate, Archie, was a messmate of mine in the old *P——*, and we sailed the Indian Ocean together, from the far-off Cape of Good Hope, the mountains of which in summer are draped with the crimson glory of splendid heaths and geraniums, to the Red Sea itself.

The fat boy, Johnnie Smart, was a loblolly boy of mine, and a droll one he was. I think I see him even now as I write.

And now just a word or two about the Sea of

Sargasso, and I have done. One can hardly conceive of a more lonesome and mysterious region in all the world of waters; lonesome, because few ships or steamers come near it unless compelled; mysterious, because, entangled in these floating weeds, may lie a clue to many a sad secret of the sea.

Here boxes and barrels might be found by the score, with many strange odds and ends that have fallen overboard from far-away ships or been washed away by sweeping seas in the ocean's great highway, each of which has a little tale of its own to tell. Here is a beef-tub, such as cooks use at sea. There would be no great difficulty in framing a story to fit that. Here is a boat's oar. Where are the hands that held it last? Yonder is a boat floating bottom uppermost, but so covered with weeds and shells, that it might have belonged to Vanderdecken himself. Yonder, entangled in the slime, is a sailor's hat, a sou'wester. Where is the wearer? Even echo does not answer, for this is the echoless sea. And yonder is a half-sunken mast. To the thick end probably a weight of shells and saline matter is attached, holding it down; but the cross-trees are above the weeds, and a spar that bobs and moves about like the head of a snake. Did drowning men once cling, we wonder, to those cross-trees, hoping against hope as they scanned the horizon for the ship that never came, till despair

succeeded hope at last, and one by one they dropped into the hungry waves!

And here, in the midst of this silent sea, you might sometimes find a bottle, sealed and containing a letter, thrown overboard, mayhap, from a sinking ship—a letter breathing words of love and the sighs of a last farewell. That letter may describe the final scene in the voyage of a brave ship with a hopeful crew, which, years and years ago, sailed away from English shores and was never again heard of. Verily, the friends and relations of the sailor men who perished in the awful storm may have waited and hoped for long decades, and died at last in the belief that those they had so long prayed for, might at last be safe on some far-off lonely isle of the ocean.

But are all things dead in this silent sea? No, by no means. The weeds themselves are alive, and, strangely enough, although there is little shoal water here, nor soundings to be taken, small fishes may be seen gambolling about in the patches of weeds, and innumerable little crabs, which Nature has painted of the exact colours of the weeds among which they live, so that they may thus escape their enemies. Here, too, we find the tunny-fish, and now and then the fins of a great shark may be seen unsettling and stirring up the weeds.

Birds, too, are here—land-birds, that were blown away from their own bright far-off island, and have never been able to return, and never will. Such is the Sea of Sargasso, the strange and mysterious echoless ocean, from which few who have ever visited have lived to make their exit.

W. GORDON STABLES.

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THE PEARL DIVERS

CHAPTER I

"WAS IT AN APPARITION?"

THERE was a dreary sough in the wind that night, as it blew cold and damp over the dull grey sea.

No one had seen the sun go down. It had disappeared behind banks of blue-black clouds, like rocks and towers, just fringing their tops with a lurid and burning copper hue as it sank and sank, till gloaming would have told one that the sun had set.

Along the top of the high cliffs that frowned darkling over the sea, young Barclay Stuart was trudging homewards to his mother's cottage. In his right hand he swung a string of beautiful sea fish, over his left shoulder he bore his fishing-rod, and as he walked he sang to himself.

Barclay could not afford a boat to go out fishing from, though oftentimes the fishermen took him; but, as a rule, he scrambled among the rocks, over the most dangerous and deepest pools, with the daring of a crab. True, he had come to grief more than once, that is, if tumbling into a deep sea pool can be called grief. Bar the wetting, this was no grief to Barclay,

for he could swim just like a seal, under the water or with head above water; and although he had often to swim a quarter of a mile before he could find a landing place, he always came up, and out, smiling. He would then undress, wring his clothes, and put them on again to dry on his back.

Not more than fourteen was Barclay Stuart at the time our story begins. Quite a lovable sort of a lad—so everybody said who knew him, and that was the whole population of the pretty, old-fashioned village of Fisherton. (N.B.—I call it Fisherton, because that was not its name.) Fisherton lies away down on the south coast of Devon. Certainly not a very aristocratic village, but if the people are poor, they are both kindly and honest. In the little town itself the best houses belonged to the doctor and the parson, both of whom laboured with right goodwill, and did their duty to those beneath them. Doctor and parson were always friendly, and oft-times met in the sick-chamber. The parson would wait patiently till the medico had done with his work, then he would take a seat by the bedside, and administer those sweet words of Christian solace that are always so dear to the sick and the ailing. Parson Grahame was a cheerful man. Whatever cares he might have had of his own—and who is there in this world who has none?—he would fling to the winds before he entered a house to pay a visit. He talked cheerfully and hopefully to the sick, and plainly too, never intoning his voice. Nevertheless he generally managed to carry the patient's thoughts

away—and away, to a happier world than this, where grief is unknown, and where there is nought but joy and happiness.

At his own home, as often as not, you would have found the kindly parson with an old coat on, digging or hoeing in his garden.

With him, as with the doctor, Barclay was an especial favourite. The boy was one of the chief singers in the choir, and his sweet girl-voice could often be heard high and clear above the others. In fact, the lad was enthusiastic in all Church matters. But he was often found in Dr. Parker's surgery.

He would come shyly into the laboratory, and say to the doctor, “ Oh, give me something to do.”

Then the surgeon would laugh, and set him to pounding away at a mortar, with a pestle as big as the boy's arm.

Barclay's blue eyes would sparkle as he toiled away, and his face got so red, that the freckles that adorned his nose and cheeks quite disappeared for a time.

Then presently he would say, “ Oh dear, I *am* tired, doctor. Please send me on an errand.”

The good doctor would laugh, but never refuse. Then away Barclay would go with a basket of medicine bottles on his arm, and he never made a mistake in delivery.

Moreover, he promoted himself to a sort of doctor's lieutenant, and never failed to inquire how the patients were, and of his own accord brought back word to the doctor, “ Old Mrs. This or old Mr. That was

better, or Mrs. So-and-So's baby had been crying all night," &c. &c.

This amused the doctor very much, but really the information was of great use to him. And Dr. Parker was not ungrateful. Neither mentally nor financially. I mean, that while he really liked the bold, well-built lad, with his fair hair and his freckled cheeks, he considered it his duty to pay him a weekly sum for his services. The doctor had a right good heart under his waistcoat. But he had one other reason for giving Barclay a wage: Mrs. Stuart lived in a rather small, but pretty cottage half-way up the wooded hill behind the village. She had been wealthy in her time, but her husband died, and lo! she suddenly found herself bereft of all the luxuries she had been used to. She had enough to buy the humble cot in which she now dwelt, and enough and no more to keep the wolf from the door. The whole household consisted of herself, her daughter Phœbe—younger than Barclay—Barclay himself, and a faithful old servant called Priscilla. She taught Phœbe herself; but the parson had taken Barclay's education in hand, and a right clever and attentive boy he turned out. At fourteen he really knew twice as much as any lad in the village of his own age.

Now Dr. Parker knew very well that the Stuarts were in straitened circumstances, and so he gave to Barclay for work done what he dared not have offered his mother in charity.

Living so close to the sea, and being so frequently

out with the fishermen, it is no wonder that he loved the ocean. He had a spice of romance in his character, and he was really speaking the truth from his very heart when, while swimming, as he did every morning, he would quote from Byron's "Childe Harold" and say, with more enthusiasm perhaps than good elocution,

“And I have loved thee, ocean ! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne like thy bubbles onward. . . .
I wantoned with thy breakers . . .
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane,
As I do now.”

But let us return to that evening when, in the gloaming, we found young Barclay Stuart marching along from the cliffs with his fish on a string, and singing a bit of a song to himself.

There is always some good in the heart of that boy who can sing, unless indeed he sings the low, non-melodious chants of music-halls.

Presently Barclay stopped and looked at his catch.

“One, two, three—why, eleven altogether, all codlings, except two little red rock piggies;¹ won't mother be pleased! The piggies mother and sister Phoebe can have; I'll have a codling all to myself, and poor Priscilla won't be forgotten.” He walked along at a brisker rate now till he remembered that he had not paid a visit to an old disused windmill that stood on a lonesome bluff some five hundred yards from Fisherton.

¹ Mullet.

"I'll just have time to run that distance and see if the great white owl is at home. She knows that I know of her nest and her round white eggs, but she knows I won't take them."

Off he set.

There was twilight enough to see about him yet.

"They do say," he muttered to himself, "there is a ghost in the old windmill. But my mother says, 'It is all nonsense, child,' and I would rather believe her than all the old wives in Fisherton."

It will be observed that Barclay had a habit of talking to himself, as most sentimental lads who have few companions have.

He soon came in sight of the deserted windmill, towering black and dismal against the orange-yellow horizon.

He vaulted over the stile, and was quickly close up to the mysterious-looking structure. His friend the great white owl flew out from her nest and greeted him with her mournful call—

"Twhoo—whoo—whoo—whoo—oo—oo!"

Well, it was the best song the poor thing could sing, and Barclay liked to hear it.

The boy walked round the windmill just once. The great sailless, outstretched arms of the mill looked dark and weird against the sky as he gazed upwards, and he was just preparing to go, when to his surprise he perceived light glimmering through the seams of the old door.

His heart beat almost audibly, a cold perspiration



THE OLD HERMIT OF THE MILL.—Page 9.

burst out on his brow, and his legs for a moment could barely support him.

But some instinct, which I cannot explain, caused him to almost throw himself against the door and dash it open.

If terror had seized him before, it was redoubled now. I am not sure indeed that the poor boy's hair did not stir under his cap.

: And little wonder either !

Here, before his round, staring eyes, stood against the farthest off wall a little rickety table, on which burned a single candle, stuck in a block of wood, and beside it on a stool a strange, strange little old man—or was it an apparition ?

The creature looked up in wonder.

Poor young Barclay had just time to stammer out the words—

“ Oh—h—are you the gho—gho—gho—ghost ? ”

Then he fainted and fell.

CHAPTER II

AT THE OLD WINDMILL

WHEN Barclay Stuart again opened his eyes he found himself lying on a pallet of straw, and kneeling beside him the strange, weird little man whom he had mistaken for a ghost. He was bathing the boy's brow with cold water.

"Better now, aren't you, dearie?"

"Ye—es, but where am I?"

"Oh, in the old windmill."

"And how did I come here?"

"Well, that I just can't tell, you see. On your legs, I suppose. They are strong and sturdy ones, anyhow."

"And you're not really a—a—ghost?"

"Ghost? Never a ghost. You see, lad, one wants to be dead before he adopts the profession of ghost; and I've never been dead at all yet, though I've been pretty near death's door more than once. Shake hands. There, that doesn't feel like a ghost's hand, does it?"

"No, I was a little fool to be frightened; but I'm better now. Is it dark? I want to get home to mother and Phœbe."

"So you shall, dearie; and there is a great big, big yellow moon to let you see your way."

The boy's face brightened at once. "I'll have such a romantic story to tell mother and Phœbe when I get home," he said laughingly.

The queer little man laughed too.

"I think," he said, "you're a clever boy. Who is Phœbe?"

"Oh, Phœbe is my sister, you know. And we live high up the hill yonder, in the white little cottage among the green, green trees and the wild flowers."

"And what does your father do?"

"Oh, I don't know what he does now."

"Has he gone away, then?"

"Yes, years and years ago. He went to heaven, you know, and I don't know what they do there."

"Poor boy!"

"And we used to be very rich when I was young, and had lots of carriages, and lots of fine things, but now——"

The lad sighed, and a tear glistened in his eye.

"Now," he added, with all the frankness of boyhood, "I think mother is just pretty poor, though she never says so."

"Well, now I must let you go. Will you come and see me here to-morrow at twelve?"

"What! do you live here?"

"No, but I'm going to."

The boy opened his blue eyes very widely indeed, and stared wonderingly at the little man.

"What! live in an old windmill?"

"Yes, lad, yes. I'm a student, you know, and I want

quiet, and this old house will just suit me. I'm going to work out some wonderful problems. Then I'm going to make a big, big fortune. And pray, boy, what are you going to be?"

"Well, you know, Dr. Parker wants to take me as an apprentice, but I don't like nasty physic, and so I'm going to be a sailor.

'The sea! the sea! the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever free.'

You know that verse, sir, I suppose. But it isn't fresh at all. It's dreadfully salt, because when I have fallen off a rock I have swallowed big mouthfuls of the water, and oh, it was nasty!

"Yet I love the sea all the same, and the beautiful birds that go skimming and wheeling over it or float on the blue smooth water. Oh, shouldn't I like to be a sea-bird, just. That is, you know," he added, after a pause, "if mother and Phoebe could be sea-birds too. Then we would all fly away together and be happy ever after."

The queer little man laughed.

It wasn't an ordinary laugh his. It was a kind of weird cachinnation in a piping voice. I have heard just such laughter proceeding from the dark recesses of gloomy forests in Africa. Birds, perhaps. Perhaps apes or baboons. But this little man's voice seemed to be far, far older than himself.

"And now, dearie," he said, "do you feel strong enough to go home?"

"Oh yes."

"Shall I help you up?"

"No, sir, I'm a man. I'm fourteen." Then he sprang to his feet and prepared to start.

"Good night, dearie."

"Good night, sir." And away went Barclay Stuart.

I think he ran home all the way at a kind of swinging trot.

"My dear Barclay," said his mother, "we were feeling so uneasy about you."

"Ah! but see what a string of fish I have. And they were all so hungry. And—so am I, mother. Oh, I've such a jolly queer adventure to tell you about. But I'm so hungry, I must keep it till after supper."

Phoebe was a child of ten, with hazel eyes and long flowing locks of beautiful auburn hair.

She had had her supper long ago, but she must needs sit down opposite her brother to talk or prattle to him and see him eat. This little lass had a skin like alabaster, as auburn-haired girls nearly always have. But her cheeks were rosy, and so were her lips.

A most intelligent child, and always cheerful and full of merriness and life.

Phoebe thought there was no one in all the wide, wide world half so clever, so brave and handsome, as her brother Barclay, and the boy fully reciprocated the fondness she bestowed upon him.

Well, as soon as supper was over Barclay got a foot-

stool and sat down by the fireside by his mother's knees. Phœbe squatted on the hearthrug beside the great honest-faced tabby. Then the lad told them all about his adventure in the old windmill. He told his little story graphically, and embellished it almost theatrically, but he spoke nothing but the truth.

When he finished by saying that he was going to meet the little man next day at twelve, a shade of uneasiness spread over Mrs. Stuart's face.

"I think, Barc," she said, "you had better not go. Who can tell what this strange being may be?"

"Oh, he's not a ghost anyhow, mother. His hand is as hard as yours or mine, and you could run right through a ghost, you know."

"No, boy, I didn't mean that he might be a ghost, but he may be some evil man."

"Oh no, mother. He was so, so kind and gentle, and besides, I promised."

"Well, dear boy, if you did promise, you must go, and I know you'll take care of yourself. Now, Priscilla, if you'll bring the Book we'll have prayers."

They were a very simple family this—would there were more like them. Evening prayers are, I fear me, much neglected in England and in Lowland Scotland, though far away in the wild Scottish Highlands and Islands every night you may hear the hymn of praise rising skywards, as rises the blue peat-smoke from the humble cottars' huts. Heigh-ho! I fear that as a nation we are not so good as we used to be.

After prayers, preparations for retiring were commenced.

But Barclay begged leave to sit up another half-hour beside his mother, who was sewing. Leave was granted, and, of course, auburn-haired Phœbe sat up too. And so did Muffie the big tabby-cat, and the girl's special favourite.

"Now tell us a story, mother."

Mother did as she was told.

Mrs. Stuart was in the habit of composing little ditties, music and words, and of these Phœbe was very fond indeed.

Strange, that while the boy always begged for a story in the long forenights of winter and spring, the girl always preferred a song. But this mother had seen much grief in her time, and her songs were sad.

Now I will just give one verse of a song of her own she sang to-night at Phœbe's request :

THE DYING BOY TO HIS MOTHER

"O mother dear, sit down by me,
And let me hold your hand,
And sing me songs, and tell me tales
Of a far-off happy land.
For when you tell me tales like these,
And sing so sweet and clear,
A seraph's voice, it seems to me,
Falls on my listening ear."

.

It was sweet spring-time, and in no part of Merrie England is spring more delightfully bracing than on

the shores of sunny Devon. Perhaps few of the wild birds ever cared to visit Fisherton itself, but the bonnie woods and the bushes of bright orange-blossoming furze all around Wildwood Cottage, Barclay's home, were alive with the song of birds when the boy awoke early next day. He paused not to listen however, but snatching up his towel he went off at a swinging trot—this boy hardly ever took time to walk—to the rocks.

To undress and plunge head foremost into deep water did not take Barclay long. I believe he startled the lazy but beautiful jelly-fish that kicked and floated about here in dozens. More than once, while having this splendid morning bath, some huge monster had got its tentacles round his ankles. The stinging sensation was terrible, and far worse than nettles, but that did not prevent him from diving again next morning just the same; for Barclay Stuart was one of those boys that are not to be denied.

On this particular morning, after a good long swim straight out seaward and back, he clambered once more on top of weed-covered rock and quickly dressed, then ran home to breakfast.

He could not, however, help pausing now and then to listen to the gurgling notes of the sweetest singer that visits our shores in spring—the nightingale.

I have often wondered who taught that little bird to sing so enchantingly. Who but God?

Barclay knew of several of their nests, but he would not have robbed them on any account. Mind you,

Barclay loved Nature, but I would not like to give you the impression that he was what is called a goody-goody boy, because he wasn't. He was just as plucky in a good cause as any boy need be. I'll give you an instance.

One day he was wandering in the woods, when he met a boy two years older than himself, and bigger also. He was marching off with some thrush's eggs from a small spruce-tree. Barclay Stuart confronted him.

"I had that nest before you," he said, clenching his fists, and holding his arms straight down by his sides.

"And why didn't you take the eggs then? You are a noodle."

"Because I didn't want to. Put back the eggs, or I'll be obliged to give you a hiding."

The other boy laughed derisively.

"What!" he cried, "you hide *me*?"

"See," he added, "I'll just put down the eggs in the moss till I give you 'what-for.'"

He did so as he spoke.

"Come a little way down the wood," said Barclay, "for fear we break the eggs."

The thrush was crying piteously for her four eggs.

Now off went two little jackets in a trice.

"Are you ready?" said Barclay Stuart, with flashing eyes.

"Ready enough for a thing like you, anyhow."

He had hardly completed the last word before a blow on the jaw stretched him out on the sward. He

rose like a fury, but his very excitement was against him. Barclay got between his guards. The big boy could flail, but he couldn't fight, and in five minutes' time he owned "beat," and putting on his jacket went sullenly away.

"You won't shake hands, then?"

"No," growled the bigger boy.

"All right then," said Barclay, wiping some blood from his cheek, "I'm not ill-willy."

When Barclay went back to the spot where the eggs had been deposited on the moss, he was surprised to find but three.

When he returned from a scamper through the woods he found that the bird had removed all of them back to her nest, and was once more making the echoes resound from tree to tree with her cheerful song.¹

I'm not sure that tears of joy did not flood the lad's eyes as he heard the now happy mavis singing.

Well, on the morning after Barclay's strange adventure at the windmill, and as soon as breakfast was over, he set out for the vicarage. A droll old rambling place it was, but cosy inside and out. The archway over the gateway was the jaw-bones of an immense

¹ In a villa garden near Bombay Dr. Dimmock and myself found a tailor-bird's nest built between two broad leaves neatly sewn together. Perhaps we looked too long at the pretty eggs to please the parent birds. Anyhow, during the night the birds managed to build another nest farther in through the shrubbery, and thither they had conveyed the eggs. Was this an instance of instinct or reason? Reason, I believe.

whale. This led into a shrubbery, but the whole house was buried in climbers—ivy, wistaria, and many other lovely trailing, flowering trees. Away behind were gardens, lawns, and an orchard, and into these French windows opened from the house. It was indeed an ideal parson's home. Still too, and quiet as if the house stood in some primeval forest. Only on stormy days the wind roared through the trees, and the dull boom of the breaking waves made a wondrous and solemn accompaniment to the scream and shriek of the wild birds that wheeled and circled in the air.

Barclay was always quiet and subdued in this bonnie vicarage.

The Rev. Peter Grahame was exceedingly kind to him, so was his wife, and little Maud, their only child, was always delighted when Barclay came. She was a modest little maiden of sweet thirteen, and the parson managed in the forenoon to conduct the teaching of both at the same time. After twelve Barclay was free to roam the wild woods, spend an hour or two in the sea, diving and swimming for all the world like a porcupine.

"Lad, lad," a fisherman would say, "it's you that'll kill yerse'f by stoppin' so long in the water."

Barclay would give himself a bit of a shake as he commenced to dress, and reply, "I'm not dead yet, Dannie."

But to-day Barclay told Mr. Grahame all about his strange adventure at the old windmill, and of the interview that would take place at twelve.

“O daddy dear,” said little Maud, “I have seen him. He stays at the Angler’s Arms. Such a droll old creature; not big, but so broad and so brown, with a tuft of hair on his chin just like our nanny-goat. I ran to the other side of the street.”

“Why, dear?”

“Oh, because his eyebrows were so big and bushy, and because his eyes shone and sparkled so, I was afraid!”

“I’m not at all afraid now,” said Barclay bravely.

A few minutes after this the boy might have been seen trotting along towards the lonesome bluff on which the windmill stood.

CHAPTER III

CAPTAIN ANTONIO'S GLASS EYE

"HA! dearie," cried the little weird-looking man as Barclay approached, "so here we are. There's nothing like punctuality. I've been all over the world, and I know that. We'll sit down on the grass, and have a little talkee-talkee."

There had been a little feeling of uneasiness in Barclay's mind as he first approached Antonio, for that was the name he chose to be known by.

And, indeed, he looked far from canny. He was a man that few boys would have cared to venture near. He gave one the appearance of being old at one moment, and young the next; at one moment fierce as a panther, and next gentle as a lamb. His face was weather-beaten in the extreme, but hair and beard were as black as coal. Though small in stature, he gave one the idea of a man of gigantic strength. And so he was, as the story will show.

"Sit down, dearie, sit down. No, not there—a few yards farther from the old windmill, where we can see it."

"No, I'm not afraid," said the boy, "but last night I took you for——"

"For a ghost, I know. Ha, ha, ha—well then, take a look at the old mill. Do you like it?"

"Oh yes, Mr.——"

"Antonio!"

"Mr. Antonio."

"Captain Antonio."

"Very well, sir. Of course I like the mill, because there is a great white owl up there, and she knows me, and I know her nest. Oh high, high up, sir; would you like to come up with me?"

"No, dearie, no. Not now."

"You see that little wooden window two stories up?"

"That I do."

"Well, I get out there, catch hold of one of the arms of the mill and shin up—oh, it is fine fun—and then I peep into the nest."

"You're a droll boy, and a daring."

"Yes, sir, a droll boy, and a daring."

"Now, Barclay Stuart, that mill is mine. I have bought it!"

"Bought the old windmill, sir?"

"That I have, dearie, and I am going to furnish it as a beautiful house, and live in it."

Barclay looked puzzled for a minute, and began to think that after all this weird little man might be mad.

Antonio, who by the way was a Spaniard, seemed to read his thoughts.

"No, boy Barclay, I'm not a crazy man. I am far, far too wise. But I am a student, and I have some

strange instruments to make, and strange studies to work out, and nothing will suit me but lonesomeness and quiet. And here I'll have it. No boys nor men can ever come here now without my leave, for I've taken all the field round about it. I shall hear nothing but the boom of the waves as they thunder on the beach, and the scream of the wild birds of the ocean, and these, dearie, are music to me. They will soothe me by day while I study, and lull me into gentle sleep at night."

It will be observed that Antonio talked good English. In fact, but for his complexion, hair, and eyes, no one would have taken him for a foreigner.

He was romantic too, though what his former life had been, or what adventures he had come through by land and at sea, Barclay could not even guess. He had yet to learn.

There was a pause in the conversation, and then suddenly Barclay burst out into a merry, happy laugh.

"How strange!" he said; "but how I should like to live in an old windmill!"

"Would you, dearie? Do you think your mammy would let you live with me and be my little companion? Oh, you should have plenty of freedom. I'm not quite a poor man, and one of these days, after I have finished my studies and sailed away to the pearl fisheries, I shall be very rich indeed. You love the sea?"

"O sir, I do, and I'll be nothing but a sailor. Mother knows it. But dear mother is poor."

The weird wee man turned and faced Barclay.

"The weekly wages I should give you, dearie, would help her to live in comfort."

"Oh, that would be jolly!"

"And on fine days we would go far to sea in a sloop and fish. I should teach you to reef, and steer, and splice, and box the compass. I'd make a sailor of you before you went to sea."

"That would be just too awfully jolly for anything," said Barclay with enthusiasm.

"Our little cruises to sea would be little picnics, and we'd have plenty to eat, and nice drinks—oh, not wine." The Spaniard shuddered slightly as he added, "I've seen terrible things happen at sea from wine-drinking. No, no, dearie, never touch wine or anything like that—it kills the body, it ruins the mind."

"And, Captain Antonio, I suppose sometimes Maud, and Phoebe, and Teenie could go with us, and Davie Drake?"

"No," replied Antonio, "not sometimes, but always, if they wish to. But who are Maud, and Phoebe, and Teenie, and Davie Drake, eh?"

"Oh, don't you know; Maud is the parson's daughter, Phoebe is my little sister, and—and—well, sir, Teenie is just a little barefooted fisher-girl, but she is so good and nice, and we often fish together for a whole day. Yes, I like—Teenie."

"Well, she shall come, bare feet and all; but who is Davie Drake?"

And now Barclay's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm.

"Oh," he cried, "he is a handsome boy, nearly a man, for he is sixteen. He is a farmer's son, but he is going to sea. And he and I roam the woods together, and often the fishermen take us far away to sea. I like Teenie, but—I *love* Davie."

"Well, dearie, these are our passengers, five in all, and I'll find the crew."

Barclay for the life of him could not help crying "Hooray! what fun we'll have!"

"And," he added, "I'm sure mother will let me live in the lighthouse with you."

"Ay, ay, dearie, and you can run home for an hour or two whenever you choose."

"Thank you, sir, thank you."

Then after a pause—"I'll run home now and tell mother and Phoebe everything, shall I?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

In less than half-an-hour Barclay Stuart was back again at the old windmill. He came at the trot as usual, but this time he was waving his cap over his head.

"Hooray!" he shouted when within thirty yards of Antonio. "It is all right, sir—it is all right. Mother is going to let me be your companion. And won't it be nice!"

Antonio was smoking a short meerschaum pipe, holding the bowl in his hand as if to warm the palm. Weird and strange-looking as he was, he seemed to fascinate the boy. But there was one thing about

this Antonio that for many a long day Barclay couldn't make out; to wit, the little man had a glass eye. Barclay had never even heard of such a thing, and the movements of this peculiar eye sometimes went far to frighten the lad. This wonderful eye had frightened more than Barclay; and while he stayed at the little inn, many believed that he was possessed of some kind of evil spirit, and all on account of this eye.

It was when sitting right in front of Antonio, face to face, that you noticed the strange cantrips of this wondrous glass eye. Although glass eyes are never useful, there is no reason why they should not be ornamental. But Antonio's eye was neither. It was, to begin with, considerably larger than the real one, and seldom moved in unison with it. Indeed, as a rule, it seemed to be staring straight away ahead, as if trying to solve the infinite and gaze into futurity. This was not, however, the worst of this mysterious eye, for it was subject to sudden spasms or uncontrollable motions, that reminded one of the eye of a chameleon. For instance, quite regardless of what the natural eye was doing, it would sometimes take an uneasy kind of a squint down at the point of the nose, as if to make sure a fly hadn't settled there, and remain thus on watch for a whole minute. Then suddenly with a jerk and a jump it would slowly revolve, till it fixed you as it were with a stony, sphinx-like stare. It appeared to look into you, to look you through and through, till you really

found your nerves giving way, felt yourself under the spell of that weird, uncanny eye. No good trying to look away from it. If you did so, you would be haunted all the time with the feeling that the eye was still upon you, and, *nolens volens*, would be obliged to look round again and face it. Truly a strange and awful eye!

And a strange being was Antonio on the whole. In Scotland he would have been called a "warlock," which is the male for a witch, you know.

But although I have tried to place him before your mind's eye, I must not have you to despise him. There is good and bad in every one of us, and, in all probability, this story will prove that the good predominated in the heart of Antonio. But we shall see. I do but present him to you as I myself knew him.

When Barclay came trotting along towards the place where Antonio sat, and finally brought up alongside him, the little man took his pipe from his mouth and smiled.

"I'm glad," he said, "right glad, dearie; and I believe you are good *here* and *here*."

He touched first his heart and then his head.

"Oh, I know," he continued. "Been fifty years in this world, and know the good from the bad. Sit you down, dearie."

Barclay sat down, and Antonio smoked some time in silence.

"Some day," he said at length, "I'll tell you bits

from the story of my life. Oh, not all. It is too, too long. Meanwhile, dearie, we shall have nothing to do, for a year at least, but study and enjoy ourselves. Hullo! what is that?"

"That," said Barclay, laughing, "is my cat. She follows me everywhere. She is with me night and day. Poor Muffie!"

A great tabby she-cat approached to where Barclay lay on the grass. She purred aloud and rubbed her bonnie face, which was vandyked with white, against the boy's arm.

"Come to me, pussy; Antonio loves a cat."

Muffie, for that was her name, walked up to the place where sat the droll little man. She walked up singing, tail in air. But when she looked up into Antonio's face she behaved in a most extraordinary manner. For just then the glass eye gave a jerk and a jump, and appeared to fix poor pussy. She lifted up one leg, her hair rose, her tail became a brush, and with her head to one side, she gave vent to as lugubrious and melancholy a wail as surely ever emanated from the larynx and lungs of a domestic cat.

"Caunter—a—wa—ow—ow—ow!"

Why, the old wooden walls of the windmill re-echoed back the sound.

"Muffie!" cried Barclay, "I'm ashamed of you. Go and shake hands with the gentleman immediately."

Down went pussie's leg, down went the hair, and she approached Antonio, and in the most dignified and lady-like way gave him a paw.

Antonio smoothed her tenderly. He even lifted her up and kissed her shoulder, and in two minutes' time Muffie was nestling on his knee, purring away like a turtle-dove.

Now, having kept cats since I was able to crawl, I know that they are very good judges of character.

Antonio himself seemed exceedingly well pleased at the friendliness exhibited to him by this queer pussy, and did not hesitate to tell Barclay so.

"And now, dearie," said the little man, with a glance upwards at the windmill, "spring is coming, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, spring is nearly here; and oh, I do love the sweet spring-time, when the sun shines warm and soft every day, sir; when the grass grows green in the fields; when the leaves and buds are on the trees; when birds are building and singing so sweetly on the trees and hedges, and the larks—oh look, sir, yonder is one up there! Can you see it, sir? Can you see it?"

"My eyes are not so young as yours, dearie."

"And then in spring, sir, the sea gets bluer, and I do think that the breakers that tumble inshore or break against the rocks are then as white as snow."

"I think you are a poet, boy."

"Oh, no, no, but I just love things, you know, and so does Davie Drake."

"Now, Barclay, look up at that old windmill again. Do you think we're going to live in it just as it is?"

"Oh, I don't know, you know. I wouldn't mind;

and I'm sure Muff wouldn't, if there are plenty of rats and mice."

Antonio laughed.

"I'm going to make such a transformation in yonder old windmill, that will cause its late owner to sit up and say he is sorry he sold it."

CHAPTER IV

THE TRANSFORMATION SCENE

WHATEVER form Antonio's studies were to take, or whatever he was going to do, there is no mistake about one thing, he was energetic, and his whole heart and soul was in his work. Whatsoever one's hand findeth to do, he should do with all his might.

Boys often write me complaining of being nervous. Why, nervous people are the salt of the earth! They do nearly all the work, and all the inventing, and most of the fighting, while the phlegmatic fellow sits at home with his feet on the fender. Antonio was not of the phlegmatic diathesis.

Next morning, when, at twelve o'clock, Barclay and his cat came to the cliff, he was astonished to find a whole squad of labourers and trades-people busy at work on the old windmill.

At first when Antonio came to Fisherton the good folks thought that if he wasn't exactly a "warlock," he was at any rate half-crazed. But a revolution had come; and as Antonio spent his money freely enough, was good to the poor, and never went down the street without making some children happy, if only by means of a few kind words, a handful of nuts, or an apple, he

soon became a universal favourite. Moreover, as he did not hide the facts from them that he was a student, and wanted perfect quiet to work out experiments, they looked upon him with greater respect, and many called him Professor Antonio.

Antonio never touched spirits or drink of any kind except coffee; but in the evenings he would come quietly in to the cosy little bar-parlour, grasping the bowl of his wee, short meerschaum, and sit quietly down in a chair not far from the "ingle nook."

With the exception of a few remarks about the weather and sea or the fishing, very little would be said for some minutes. But after Antonio shook the ashes from his pipe, refilled it again, and drank his two or three modest cups of coffee, these honest fishermen fellows drew their chairs closer around the fire and prepared to listen to a story. And that story was sure to come.

Such adventures, too, he had to tell! He had sailed the wide world over. He had fought on land as well as at sea, but through it all he seemed to have borne a charmed life, for he was never even wounded. It was evident to every one that Antonio was speaking the truth, and nothing else; not even embellishing it. It was evident, too, that he was a brave man, brave even to a fault—and I suppose that means rash; and so if it had not been for that mysterious, uncanny eye of his, all hands would have loved him instead of merely liking him.

Fisherton was not a mean village. The most of the inhabitants were honest fisher-folks, but in it there were good tradesmen, carpenters, builders, all kinds and conditions of workmen. So Antonio, although he would get the simple furniture he needed from a town some ten miles off, determined to employ only village labour.

And this made him a greater favourite than ever.

So here they were on this bright, sunny spring morning at work outside and in.

Antonio was walking about rubbing his hands and evidently enjoying the sight, but giving a word of command or a word of encouragement wherever it was required.

"Ah! here you are, dearie," he said to our boy, "and here's old pussy. I'm feeling just real cheery this morning; but look, Barclay boy, how the light breeze ruffles the sea, and how the sunshine dances and glitters on the ripples, just for all the world as if unseen hands were sowing millions and millions of diamonds on it!

"But," he continued, "where is Davie Drake? Oh, we must see Davie."

"Yes," said Barclay, laughing, "I'll bring him. But he will be from home for a week."

The boy and Antonio now had a peep inside. There was so much dust, however, that little could be seen.

Men were cleaning down the walls, and, I fear,

breaking up the homes of many a lusty spider that had been in possession of the lower gallery for many years, till they had come to look upon the place as their very own.

I may mention that all the machinery had long since been removed from the mill, only the sails had been left outside, or rather the yardarms that used to support these sails.

Antonio went away to the nearest big town shortly after this to purchase furniture and fixings, and Barclay Stuart went with him. Not pussy this time, though.

Well, they stayed for a whole week, and the little man was kindness itself to the boy. Not only did he feed him like a fighting cock—I really don't know, by the way, how fighting cocks *are* fed, and I have no desire to know—the “sport,” so called, is brutal and brutalising in the extreme.

Antonio took the boy to concert and theatre, and, I'm quite sure of one thing, half at least of his own happiness consisted in witnessing the rapture and delight of Barclay.

Well, the days were spent in shopping, in the purchase of neat but nice furniture, carpets, oilcloth, curtains, and drapery and napery.

Antonio was as fastidious as a woman.

“I do like,” he explained to Barclay, “to have things nice around me. Couldn't work or think if they weren't!”

But there were kitchen or cookery articles to be bought as well, and many other things I need not mention. Anyhow, it was evident enough that Antonio knew what he was about.

Barclay and Antonio occupied adjoining rooms in the hotel where they lived.

"I say," said Antonio on the first night, and before leaving the lad's room, "it may seem a queer question from a barnacled old salt like me, but—do you say your prayers?"

"Oh, always," said the boy seriously.

"Right, dearie, right. And now I'm off."

At the end of eight days they returned to Fisherton.

Antonio now told Barclay that he must not come near the windmill for five days, but that he, Antonio, would come to see his mother and Phœbe.

So he did the second night.

"Been very busy all day," he explained to Mrs. Stuart, "or would have come earlier. And this is Phoebe, that I have heard so much about. Come towards me, child."

Like every other child, Phœbe was somewhat afraid of him at first.

"Don't be afraid, dearie," he said; "I'm not pretty, because my face is the colour of a brick, and all that, but I dearly love little boys and girls."

Mrs. Stuart hastened away to get tea, which she made with her own hands, and the two were left to talk together.

When Mrs. Stuart returned she found her wee daughter on perfectly familiar terms with the little weird man. In fact, she was sitting on one of his knees, prattling away as only children can, and Muffie the cat sat on the other, singing aloud.

I always think there must be something good in people whom cats and children take readily to.

After tea and a long talk Antonio said to Phœbe—

“You have a nice piano there, and I’m sure you can play.”

“Oh yes, I can play lots.”

A child’s frankness is very charming, and one can easily forgive their pride and confidence in their own powers to do this, that, or the other.

Antonio was most indulgent. He seated her at the piano, drew up her sleeves a little way, and while she played air after air, listened as respectfully, and apparently as delighted as if he himself were the performer.

“Bravo! dearie,” he said, as he gently lifted her down from the stool; “you’ll be a capital player soon. Just keep on studying.”

“Can you play a little?” she asked naïvely.

Antonio smiled. “Yes, just a little,” he replied.

She seized his two hands, and jumped up and down, as children have a way of doing.

“Oh do, oh do,” she cried, “like a dear sir.”

“When so beautiful a little lady as you invites me to play, how dare I refuse?” he answered gallantly.

Then he seated himself at the piano, just as Barclay himself and Davie Drake came quietly in and sat down in a far-off corner.

Was that music, or was it magic? That was the question that Mrs. Stuart could not help asking herself as she sat in her chair enchanted, enthralled.

Never in all her little life had Phœbe heard such music. Her face was a study—the earnest glance, the round eyes, the half-parted lips, she looked like beauty bewitched.

Meanwhile the melody and harmony flowed on, sometimes ineffably sweet, and tender as tears, sometimes bold, ringing, defiant, and clear, anon plaintive and low, and dying away at last in cadence that none who had listened to it could ever forget.

There were real tears in Mrs. Stuart's eyes as she extended her hand to Antonio.

"We can never thank you enough for that," she said.

Curiously enough there were tears in Antonio's eyes too. Ay, even in the glass one; for tears, you know, are not secreted by the eyes themselves, but by glands around them.

"What did you play?" said Barclay, coming forward eagerly.

"Nothing," was the modest reply. "No, nothing. All I have played was mere impromptu."

"Composed on the spur of the moment?" said Mrs. Stuart.

The little man smiled.

"That," he replied, "I cannot answer. I sit down, I strike a note or chord, there is an answer from here"—he placed his hand upon his heart; "then I leave the heart and the instrument to do everything. I but listen, though, listening, I sometimes weep.

"And this is Davie Drake? Lay aft, Davie."

The big brown-faced, fair-haired lad came towards him, blushing through his brownness—blushing, but smiling.

"How are you, Davie?"

"Middlin', thanks."

"And you must come and see me some evening, when Barclay and I are settled in the old windmill."

"Yes, sir."

"And what are you going to be?"

Davie looked up at him wonderingly; he seemed to think that everybody knew what his profession was booked as.

"Oh, a sailor of course, sir."

"Well, I thought so, you know; but, Davie, I'm going to get a nice ship of my own, and Barclay's coming. You had better make up your mind to come too."

"When, sir?"

"Well, it may be a year, or a year and a half yet. Meanwhile, you know, you can take a cruise or two, just to get up to the ropes and get your sea-legs."

"And you're going round the world, sir?"

"I'm going, Davie, where you and Barclay will have a real good time of it."

That was a most pleasant evening, which they all

spent at Barclay's mother's cottage; everybody, including the cat, had been happy.

“As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure.”

And it wasn't the last happy evening, either. But when the five days of Barclay's suspension, let me call it, were at an end, the weird little man came to the cottage to bring him and Phoebe to the old windmill, and pussy came trotting up behind.

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Barclay stared with astonishment as he clambered over the stile, and Antonio lifted Phoebe over.

Why, here was a change indeed! No, but rather a complete metamorphosis.

To begin with, the mill outside had been painted white from top to bottom, only the yardarms of the sails were picked out in dark grey. It looked a new, fresh, and beautiful building. On the side next the sea a large French window had been placed on the first floor; this opened out and on to a large balcony, big enough to sit comfortably upon. And this balcony was beautifully adorned with evergreen plants and spring flowers. So cosy, so comfortable did it look, that little Phoebe clapped her hands with delight and cried, “Oh my! how pretty!”

But if Phoebe was delighted with the outside show of the old windmill, she was struck dumb with wonderment when she reached the first floor by a nice iron winding staircase.

The lower floor had been boarded, and being very capacious, was quite ready to receive all the chemical and other instruments that Antonio meant to stock it with. And one end of it was a kitchen, with oil-stove, racks filled with plates, and cupboards as well.

Indeed, only a sailor could have thought of all these things.

Phœbe didn't say a word for a time after she reached the first-floor apartment. But no one could now have recognised it as a portion of an old windmill. The walls were panelled with charming wood, and hung with prettily painted pictures, which were a credit to the owner's taste. Brackets and flower-stands were everywhere, and a cosy corner here and there, that one longed to lounge in. Then there were beautiful lamps or fairy lights hid among clusters of flowers, ready to be lit up when gloaming fell grey over the sea.

There seemed to be mirrors everywhere also, and the fireplace and overmantel were works of art. Little tables were here and there, and a carpet that yielded to the feet covered the floor, and the great French windows that opened out to the beautiful balcony, where on summer evenings one might sit with a book, were most artistically draped.

The *tout ensemble* was altogether effective, even to fascination.

"O sir, is this—is this—" she couldn't get any further just for a moment or two—

"Is this—fairyland?"

"Whatever you like to call it, dearie," said Antonio, patting her on the head.

"And—and can you go through that great big beautiful looking-glass?"

Antonio and Barclay both laughed.

"A bull might," said Barclay, "but I shouldn't like to try."

The furniture was chaste, and there was in the room a rich-toned piano, as well as a guitar. And this last was the weird wee man's favourite instrument.

The two bedrooms were on the floor above, tiny, but cosy, clean, and sweet. Not much larger were they indeed than ships' cabins, but each had a window that looked out to the sea.

Antonio's servant or valet had not yet arrived, but he himself was quite equal to the occasion. He not only made tea for the children, producing from a cupboard down below an immense cake, with fruit, but he afterwards, just as gloaming began to fall and shadows were creeping over the sea, just as distant ships lost the whiteness of their sails and turned grey and gloomy, took out his guitar and sang to them so softly and sweetly, that poor little innocent Phoebe was entranced.

"Oh dear!" she cried, "I wish I could play on that great big beautiful fiddle!"

"So you shall, dearie," was the weird wee man's reply. "If you toddle down to me now and then when we are settled, I will teach you on a smaller guitar than this."

But now the children must go home, and Antonio himself will see them safe to their own gate, for look—

“Just above yon sandy bar,
As the day grows fainter and dimmer,
Lonely and lovely a single star
Lights the air with a dusky glimmer.

Into the ocean faint and far
Falls the trail of its golden splendour
And the gleam of that single star
Is ever refulgent, soft, and tender.”

CHAPTER V

A WONDERFUL EVENING

THERE is no doubt at all that about this time, and for more than a year afterwards, old Antonio, as the village children called him, was *the* most remarkable man in Fisherton, or in the regions around it.

But even now, after he had settled down in his strange romantic home, there were not wanting people who shook their heads and said—

“Ay, neighbour, but there is something mysterious about Antonio—something mysterious, and it will all come out one day. Ay, it will all come out! *Is* he good or *is* he bad, *is* he false or *is* he true? them’s the question, maties.”

“Neighbour,” might be the reply, “what you says is right, but what I says is right too. What I says I do say, and it’s this. A bad un may pretend love for children and for birds and beasts, but if he is bad, then take my word for it, lad, the children and the birds and the beasts won’t care for him. Birds and beasts always act the truth, and wouldn’t tell a lie even if they could talk.

“Now, neighbour, I’ve been up at the old windmill, and the hermit, as he is called, took me upstairs to

his beautiful room. He told me to stand well back from the window and I'd maybe see a sight. It was just feedin' time like, he told me !

"I did as I was told and watched.

"The balcony is very big and broad, you know, and trailed o'er with lovely flowers, neighbour.

"He went down below now, to the lower deck as it were, but soon he was up again, carrying five plates, one on top of the other, and also a basket of broken food, suet, bread, and bits of meat.

" 'Sit as still now,' he says to me, 'as a plaster saint—don't cough, don't even wink, don't make a movement loud enough to wake a weasel.'

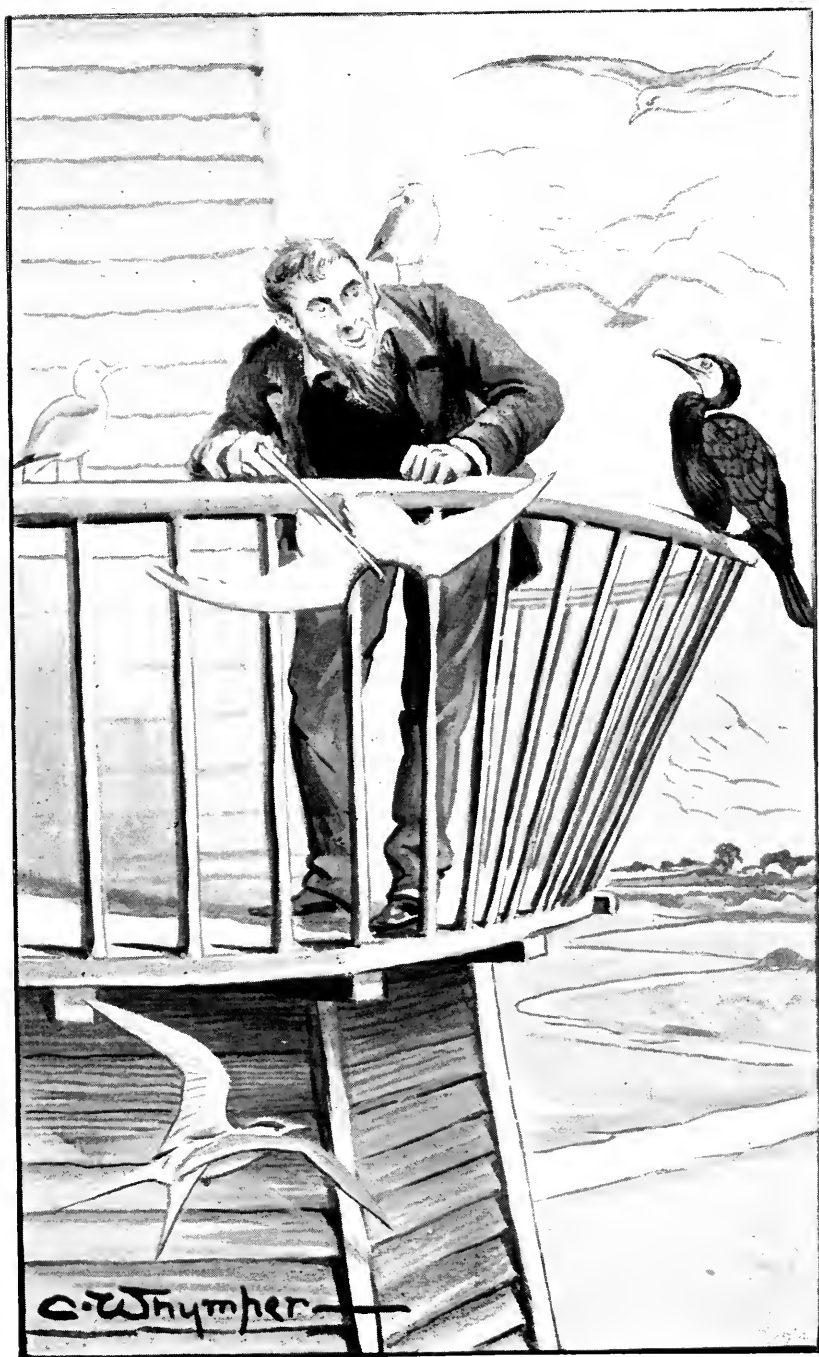
"So there I sat as quiet's a little prayin' Sam'el.

"Then down went the dishes on the balcony, and the hermit of the old windmill took from the corner a pair of wings (white and big).

"They were mounted on top of a stick no bigger than a fiddle-bow.

"He leant over the balcony just for a moment looking east and west, and I could see him cross his breast, as Catholics do, then he uttered a loud and mournful cry. Whether whistle or shout, I couldn't say, neighbour, but after repeating this several times he waved the wings.

"What I saw next almost frightened me. A vast multitude of sea-birds, and even rooks and cormorants, assembled round the balcony and alighted on it. I never saw gulls so near before, neighbour. Never knew they were so clean, and white, and beautiful,



"Neighbour! It were a lovely sight."—Page 45.

and with such wondering eyes. Neighbour, I ain't ever going to shoot a sea-gull again.

"Well, the hermit was sitting cross-legged on the balcony, and more than a score alighted near him, to eat the bread from the soft food from the plates. Now and then a little quarrel would get up among these. But he gently lowered that winged stick and touched them, and peace was at once restored.

"The other birds, especially the cormorants, came alongside him, stood on his knees, on his shoulders and arms, and fed from his hands.

"Neighbour, it were a lovely sight.

"And he talked to them as he gently smoothed their bonnie heads with a little finger. I noticed it was always his little finger he used.

"Sometimes he bent down and kissed the bird nearest him on the poll.

"And more than that, neighbour, as he sat there feeding his pets, he sang sweet and low to them, a kind of unearthly chant, but mournful, and the birds seemed to like it, too.

"But the food was done at last, and the hermit slowly rose. Then away flew the flock. For a few minutes they circled and circled around the windmill, then directed their course seawards.

"I noticed a tear on the hermit's cheek, but he dashed it off with his sleeve, as if ashamed of such weakness.

"‘Pardon me,’ he said, ‘but I must now allay my feelings.’

“And down he sat to the piano, and such wild, rampant music I never heard before. Not all rampant though, for it got low and mournful at times, and so touching, that I felt cold all along my spine, neighbour, and had to bite my lips to keep back the tears.

“He stopped all at once and came towards me.

“‘As a rule,’ he said, ‘people don’t like me owing to this ugly, erratic eye of mine, but what care I? Have I not solitude, and don’t all God’s creatures love me?’”

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I make a slight digression here, reader, just to tell you that you would not think the above sketch one whit overdrawn if you but knew the tameness of the wild birds I myself feed in winter, at my wigwam window, or even in summer away in the woods. I boldly aver that the wild birds *do* know who loves them, and that they can return that love with affection unalloyed. It is only because of the cruelty of man towards wild creatures that they suspect him of evil, and keep aloof from him.

Do you remember what Burns says in his address to the poor mouse, whose nest he had upturned with his ploughshare?

“I’m truly sorry man’s dominion
Has broken Nature’s social union,
An’ justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earthborn companion
An’ fellow mortal.”

Truer words were never spoken.

“Well, neighbour,” said the first speaker, “all that but increases the mystery. A good heart he must have in spite of that awful eye, but still I think he isn’t altogether human.”

In a week or two extraordinary packages began to arrive in lorries from the distant railway station, extraordinary in size and in shape.

These were safely conveyed into the under room or workshop of the old windmill.

With the help of bold, strong Davie Drake and Barclay Stuart, Antonio undid these, and set them up, as he called it. There had already been arranged a bench, with loops of leather on the wall behind to hold the various sorts of carpenters’ and other stranger tools.

By the side of the bench a lathe was put up.

Other packages contained many different kinds of electric instruments, storage batteries, &c., and a miscellaneous and curious collection of instruments and tools, such as the boys had never seen before.

Those were each and all put in their respective places, and when everything was done, then Antonio sank into a chair with a sigh of relief, and surveyed his varied apparatus with a smile of great satisfaction.

“Of course, dearies,” he said to the boys as the glass eye took a sudden squint down at his nose, “you won’t know what all these things are for, but in time I’ll put you up to the ropes and teach you.”

“Thank you, captain,” said bold Barclay; but Davie Drake, powerful and strong though he was for a lad of his years, said nothing. It is awkward for a boy to be shy, but time and hard work soon banishes the failing.

Well, Barclay had been here with Captain Antonio not much over a week, when, one day early in May, a somewhat strange apparition appeared crossing the field towards the old windmill. He called Antonio’s attention to it. But *it* was evidently a man, tall, erect, and dressed Indian fashion, in long garments of white, with a sash of crimson, sandals, and a huge turban above his brown-black face.

As he drew nearer, walking straight and soldierly, young Barclay could not help remarking how extremely handsome he was. No sculptor could have fashioned from black marble more comely chiselled features had he tried ever so much. He was young, perhaps not over twenty-five, and his long brown hair depended in ringlets almost to his waist.

The weird wee man rubbed his hands with glee.

“Ha!” he cried, “now is my establishment complete. Here comes Pandoo, my faithful man of Mahratta.”

He waved him a welcome from the balcony, and Pandoo looked up and smiled, showing as he did so two rows of teeth as white as those of a Norfolk spaniel. In a minute or two more Pandoo presented himself.

He had divested himself of his sandals, and

he bowed low as he took his master's hand and raised it till it touched his brow—a most graceful form of salutation, never seen in our rough-and-tumble haughty Briton.

“So you lib (live), sah?”

“Yes, Pandoo, and I'm hearty and hopeful.”

“And you still tink you go to sea in big ship and make you' fortnoon, sah?”

“Sure of it, Pandoo. Sure of it, lad. And, look here, you shall share it.”

“Pandoo's heart do flutter wit' joy and 'citement.”

“Well then, go below, and make yourself some coffee, and bring us some. This is young Mr. Barclay Stuart. He too will go with us when all is ready.”

Pandoo turned to Barclay and salaamed.

“I hope you is well, sah, and you' vife?”

Barclay laughed outright.

Antonio hastened to explain that he was but a boy, and that boys didn't marry in this country.

“You 'scuse me den,” said Pandoo, with another salaam, “but I am one much big fool. I go to make de coffee. I bling de poor chile some too.”

In a very short time Pandoo returned with a tray, with cups of coffee and fancy biscuits. But never before had Barclay, or “the dear child,” as Pandoo called him, tasted so delicious an infusion.

Pandoo himself squatted tailor-fashion at the other end of the room.

He conversed with Antonio, but in a language that Barclay could not understand one word of.

Sometimes the Indian's face was lit up with smiles, but there were moments when dark lightning seemed to flash from his eyes as he spoke, and he motioned with his hand as if waving sword or dagger in the battlefield. At such times he looked as fierce as the wildest tiger ever encountered in Indian jungles.

When Pandoo looked fierce, his mood appeared to communicate itself to Antonio as well. His brows were lowered, his face sternly set, and the large glass eye rolled about in a manner that almost frightened poor Barclay Stuart.

But the mood would pass quickly off; then while they continued to jabber in Hindustani, they both laughed loud and clearly, so that Barclay was fain to join them, though he could not have told any one why on earth he did so.

Everything was settled at the old windmill in less than a week, and Antonio busy all forenoon with his experiments.

The good folks of Fisherton had certainly nothing to complain of as regards either Antonio or Pandoo, his servant. Both were civil and pleasant; they disbursed money freely, and took an interest in everything.

Although Barclay still spent an hour or two at the parson's every morning, Antonio took him in hand also. In the forenoon he assisted the weird wee man in the laboratory, and much did he learn as to the science of electricity.

In the afternoon he was allowed to run home, and

every fine evening they went out for a sail in a small, well-rigged sloop that Antonio had hired.

More about these little voyages in next chapter.

Meanwhile I want to say something about an entertainment, that Pandoo and he gave in the lower room of the old windmill.

Antonio's fame had been noised abroad, and albeit the tickets for the entertainment were dear, the little hall was quite crowded with good people, even clergymen and their wives attended.

The room was very capacious, and it was prettily adorned with evergreens and flowers, and lit by crimson and white balls of electricity. At one end was a small platform, and behind this a huge sheet of glass, which formed the front of a shallow box.

The performance was not a long one, but it was certainly very strange. It commenced with a piano recital by Antonio. The audience were spell-bound. The music seemed magical. During the more slow and pathetic movements many ladies were seen to weep. Indeed, the whole piece seemed to tell a tale of war and love, and tell it too as distinctly as if it had been couched in words.

After this Pandoo, while Antonio played, gave a strange Indian dance, which was certainly far more natural and graceful than any of the stupid skirt-dances people are used to see at London music-halls.

Beautiful scenes from the Indian Ocean and the islands thereof were now depicted on a screen from the lantern, and this put the children present into ecstasies

of delight. Then followed a strange but beautiful duet-song by both, and accompanied by the guitar. This was encored, and in answer Antonio himself gave a performance on the guitar, accompanied by a charming Indian song. The audience were too polite to encore again, although they would have sat all night to listen to sounds like these.

Pandoo, in the rich Indian dress his master had caused him to don, was greatly admired by the ladies.

But Pandoo astonished every one when he commenced his wonderful acts of jugglery. I cannot describe the half of these. It would be but waste of space; for unless my readers go out to India, they may never see, and could not be expected to believe, what these men can do. Nor will the best of them suffer themselves to be imported to this country to perform.

While Pandoo was acting, Antonio played strange uncanny music on his guitar.

But the audience stared aghast to see the Indian stand at the back of the stage, open his mouth, and apparently with some difficulty catch the end of a piece of tape. Then he commenced to draw it out.

The audience laughed, then they grew suddenly serious; for Pandoo was walking round and round the little stage, pulling and pulling at the tape, which he permitted to fall on the floor. There seemed no end to it. There appeared to be as much on the stage at last as would have sufficed to stuff a pillow.

Then at last it ended—in what, think you? why,

in a beautiful little bird, that flew up to the roof and sat among the evergreens to twitter and sing.

And now Pandoo bowed.

And the audience were wild in their applause.

Your true Indian juggler despises such tricks as knife or sword swallowing. These are far beneath the dignity of a nation that has studied jugglery probably since the days of Moses and Aaron.

"I will show you now," said Pandoo, "a common Angleese piece of de juggle, what de quack jugglers make you Angleese stare with at de halls of music."

A boy brought a basket. Antonio submitted to have himself roped into a knot and squeezed into the basket. Then the basket was closed.

"I now proceed," he said, "to kill my master with our dagger knife. Little child'en, you must not be afraid. It is all fun."

"Say you prayah," he shouted, "say you prayah. You is goin' to die plenty quick. I give you tree minutes."

Meanwhile Pandoo picked up Antonio's guitar. "Ha, ha, ha," he laughed right merrily. "This belong to me now. He not can take that with him. Guitar no good in de grave. De worms not care for moosic.

"Now I shall kill he plenty quick."

It did appear dreadful to see Pandoo lift the dagger and stab the basket all round, while groans for some time issued therefrom and finally ceased, and blood ran in darkling rivulets along the stage.

Everybody looked very serious now, till presently up went the lid of the basket and out jumped Antonio.

Everybody laughed, but Pandoo pretended to be very angry.

"My maxim is," he said, "always to make sure, and so de next time I shall use a Maxim gun."

"Now, British ladies, gemlem, and child'en," he added, "I show you how dis is done. De unroping is nothing. And at de slightest touch the blade of de dagger sinks back into the hilt. Master Barclay, show it round."

Barclay was delighted to do so, after pretending to stab Davie Drake through the heart with it.

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Pandoo's next trick appeared miraculous. I have often seen myself tricks like it in India, but never could understand them. Nor would the jugglers explain.

A larger basket was procured and turned upside down on the stage.

"Will any little girl come under de basket?"

"Oh," cried Barclay, "Phœbe won't be afraid, I'm sure."

Phœbe loved Pandoo, and could trust him thoroughly, so she appeared shyly on the stage with her left forefinger between her rosy lips.

Pandoo patted her, and whispered something in her ear, and as she sat down he covered her over with the basket.

"She is cooped," said Pandoo, "like one boo'ful bantam hen."

He then played an Indian march on the guitar.

"Now we will let the little bantam free," he cried.

He lifted the basket.

There was no Phoebe there, but in her place a huge python or boa-constrictor. He took the guitar again, and while every one looked in fear and trembling, he played a strange wild air, chanting with his voice as he did so.

The boa raised its head slowly, and finally curled itself lovingly round Pandoo's body. But he soon disengaged it, and once more placed it under; more music, and once more he lifted the basket. The snake was gone, but in its place grew a charming rose-bush.

Pandoo was delighted. He plucked the charmed roses, and tossed them among the audience.

Again the basket was placed over the rose-bush, and he commenced to play a merry air, but lo! as he still played, the basket seemed to lift itself, and out popped Phœbe herself, as rosy and bright as the month of June, and laughing so merrily, that every one in the audience clapped their hands and cheered.

Dr. Parker now rose and said quietly—

"I think, ladies and gentlemen, that trick is done through the medium of a trap-door."

"Would the good doctor step up and examine the stage?"

The good doctor would.

There was not the slightest trace of a trap-door, and the doctor looked considerably confused.

Now I myself believe that in tricks of this sort in India—and if in India, why not in Britain?—hypnotism probably plays a conspicuous part.

I cannot say how, and it seems to me incredible that a whole audience could be hypnotised; but still it should be remembered that, in our country, this science is as yet only in its infancy.

Lest my young reader should dream of these mysterious performances, I must conclude this chapter by briefly describing the prettiest scene of all. I may mention at once that it was not conducted with the lantern, though in part that may have been used.

The effects were visible *inside* the immense glass framework at the back of the stage, and every effect was accompanied by appropriate music.

Antonio had seated himself at the piano, and as Pandoo had disappeared, it was evident that he was “wire-puller.”

The electric light was extinguished in the hall, but the beautiful fairy lights, that shone among flowers and foliage, gave a dim but beautiful radiance.

Looking into that huge glass case was like gazing through a mirror into Elfinland.

The first scene was morning just breaking over the sea, on which was a ship, far away in the distance, bobbing and curtsying to the waves. Ladies who had opera-glasses declared they could see the sailors at

work on the deck, but this might have been but female fancy.

On the horizon were rolling grey clouds, higher above in the sky strips or lines of crimson cloud; then slowly the lower clouds turned to purple and bronze, the sun was rising, and soon his red gleams escaped from a low-down rift in the sky, and a triangle of blood red—its broadest part furthest off—fringed the sea, and the sails of the ship became a charming pink.

As it rose higher and higher, the cloud scenery became still more lovely.

The ship too altered her course as if by magic, and bore away on the other tack. It was soon broad daylight on that wondrous ocean, and every wave and wavelet sparkled and shone in the silvery rays of the sun.

The ship had sailed now two-thirds across the sea, and the audience felt sorry to think it must soon disappear.

But now a calm ensued. Though the waves continued high, they were oily and smooth. The ship rolled continuously, and the sails shivered and flapped. Some said afterwards they could hear the flapping, but this was mere imagination.

Dark blue, almost black, clouds are now seen rapidly banking up on the horizon, and spreading up and up till the whole sky is overcast, and the sea beneath is darkling, grey and gloomy. Sail is being rapidly taken in on board that phantom ship; it is

reduced to a storm-jib, a mainsail, and close-reefed fore-topsail.

None too soon; a vivid flash of lightning darts athwart the sky, and in a few seconds thunder, that seems to shake the windmill to its foundation, follows.

The thunder-storm, while it lasted, was terribly realistic; the lightning most vivid—indeed, it seemed to set the sea on fire. But winds began to ruffle the waves, and the storm retired, though muttering thunders were still heard. A squall came on, white horses on breaking waves were everywhere visible. The barque flew on before it, and finally dashed out from this splendid *tableau-vivant*, and was seen no more. Strange cloud effects followed. Then once more the hall was lit up with a blaze of electric light, and all was over.

Antonio advanced to the footlights. For once in a way the glass eye remained stationary, or followed the movements of the other, so that he did not look so weird and uncanny.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, “my little performance is at an end. I thank you all for the comfort of your attendance, and hope to see you again another night.” (Cheers.)

“Meanwhile,” he added, as Pandoo placed a bag in his hand, “this is the offering, the price of your tickets. I desire to place it in the hands of the good parson, Mr. Grahame. No applause, please; I am nervous and shy. I do not require the money;

I am in the position of the freebooters of old, who used to rob the rich and give it to the poor. I do not pretend to be rich, but I have inventions on hand that I hope will, before many years go by, make me so, and the probability is, that if I am spared to return from sea, I will build me a house in the woods and settle down among you good people."

There was applause now, that he tried in vain to stem, and many ladies of the nervous diathesis were seen to put their handkerchiefs to their eyes.

"Phœbe dearie, come here."

Phœbe, all smiles, ran up and on to the stage.

"Carry this bag, dearie, to your good clergyman, and tell him he is to expend every sixpence of it in buying warm things for the poorest children in the village."

Without waiting for a reply from Mr. Grahame, the queer wee weird man waved his hand, and next minute had disappeared up the iron winding staircase into his own drawing-room.

So ended a truly wonderful evening.

CHAPTER VI

*“THE TWILIGHT IS SAD AND CLOUDY, AND THE
WIND BLOWS WILD AND FREE”*

CAPTAIN ANTONIO, as we may now call him, was a very busy man indeed, and spent all his forenoon in his study making experiments, that seemed to Barclay Stuart to partake of the marvellous. These were generally electrical.

But he found time to teach Barclay both ashore and afloat, and Davie Drake—shy, handsome Davie, who blushed like a red, red rose when any one spoke suddenly to him—was taught when afloat in the sloop.

The rumour of Antonio’s wonderful performance was spread all over the village and the parishes around, so he kindly consented to give another séance in the Town Hall, and for this the tickets were only just high enough to prevent a block.

I need not say that it was successful. And I believe the reader will readily believe, that many of those ignorant but innocent fishermen were more convinced now than ever that Antonio was “in league with the Evil One.” This is precisely how they phrased it.

The matter didn’t trouble the weird wee man much.

All the village children adored Antonio, and even their parents liked him. As for the shopkeepers, they gladly supplied him with goods. His money was as good as any one else's, even if it had come from uncomfortable quarters.

The sloop, as I hinted before, did not belong to Antonio. She was hired for the summer. But she was a beauty. She could dart through the water with the speed of a grebe.

She was named the *Grebe*.

How perfectly delightful were those little sea-trips!

The crew were Captain Antonio himself, Pandoo, who was a good sailor, and a sturdy fisher fellow called Petersen. I think Petersen was a Dane, but I am not sure. He was an excellent and hardy sailor, but not over pleasant to look at. He had fair hair and lowering brows, and a too flat nose; moreover he spoke but little, and seldom looked any one in the eyes.

He was never once seen to smile. But that made not the slightest difference to the general jollity of the cruise.

The passengers were always much the same, Barclay and Davie Drake, who were picking up as much seamanship as they possibly could, being taught principally by the Dane Petersen and by Pandoo himself. Then there was Phoebe, also Maud, the parson's little bright girl, and the fascinating little fisher lass, Teenie, whom Barclay boldly called his sweetheart. Bare feet, fisher dress, and all, innocent Teenie really was as

picturesque and pretty as an artist's dream of female loveliness.

Well, the plan was to start pretty early, especially if the silvery gleam of a shoal of mackerel could be descried from the cliff tops. Once among these, the vessel was laid-to or kept dodging, and fishing over the side became general.

It was evident that Captain Antonio was kind-hearted towards all God's creatures, for every fish as soon as hauled up was killed. Fishermen do not do this I know, but those who fish for pleasure should.

I have often been grieved to see sportsmen while grouse-shooting thrust the wounded birds which the dogs had retrieved, carelessly into the bag, there to linger long in sufferings indescribable.

The next generation, it is to be hoped, will not be so cruel.

Cruelty is often born from want of thought. Yet I have seen the roughest of men most tender-hearted.

Pardon just one little digression. When a medical student I lived for six months in a Highland village and got very friendly with the young surgeon of the wee town. But he was a wild Highlander indeed, and a man of immense strength. He was good-tempered to a degree, but if any one offended his dignity he had dearly to rue it. I remember a sturdy brewer's waggoner once insulted him. Dr. J—— went for him at once. He lifted him clean and clear off his feet, doubled him over one of the waggon-shafts, head

and shoulders downwards, between the horse and the shaft, and so right under the horse. By good luck the horse never moved, or matters might have been serious. That man had the greatest respect for Dr. J—— ever after.

Dr. J—— got the present of a young kid, that he told me he would have killed for our Christmas dinner.

“Oh, what about that kid?” I said, a few days before the festival.

Dr. J—— smiled and held his head to one side. “I think, Gordon,” he replied, “we must be doin’ wi’ a turkey. That bonnie kid follows me everywhere and licks my hand. I couldna have it killed.”

So this kid grew up into a great bearded goat, and became a favourite with every one in the village.

Oh, these happy ocean picnics. Neither Barclay Stuart nor Davie Drake ever forgot them, and often on moonlight nights, when keeping watch in far-off foreign seas, they used to think and talk of them, till a big lump used to rise in Davie’s throat, and he could say no more.

Fishing went on briskly as long as the fish would bite. Then a halt was called, and as by this time it would be long past noon, the hamper was opened and dinner announced. The pies—some of them curry pies—made by Pandoo himself, were delicious, and abundant enough to have served a bigger boat’s crew.

Then there were tarts and fruit *galore*, with ginger ale and lemonade to finish up with.

It would have done any one's heart good to see the beaming faces of the children as they enjoyed their repast, laughing and talking prettily as they did so. Their rippling talk and laughter, Antonio told Pandoo, put him in mind of music-bells and bird-song.

Well, dinner over, the sloop cruised away along the beautiful coast.

In some places this was draped in the greenery of drooping trees, in others the cliffs were o'er-topped with green, *green* banks, where the whitest of sheep were grazing among orange-bright flowering furze. It was all charming, all beautiful, and sometimes for long minutes no one spoke, so pleasant and dreamy was the glamour shed over them by sunlight and sea.

But when the sun began to wester, Pandoo would serve out tea, which he made hot in a curious invention of Antonio's. Then the sloop was put about.

Probably in returning the wind would be unfavourable, though seldom high.

This did not matter a great deal, however.

They sailed tack and half tack, and while mainsail and jib bellied out in the breeze, the captain used to take out his guitar and sing songs sweet and low, that he well knew would ravish and enchant those three little maidens, and delight even the heart of the Dane.

Thus sailing and singing they would approach the harbour mouth, and down would drop the main-sail.

Those ocean picnics were not only delightful, they were idyllic—summer idylls—and Antonio had meant they should be so. Weird and strange though he looked, it was quite evident that his chief happiness consisted in making others happy.

Though I have called the *Grebe* a sloop, she was to all intents and purposes a sweet little lass of a yacht, as tight a wee craft as ever went dancing over a British sea. Antonio was nothing if not a sailor; and as at one time of his life, and before he had his eye knocked out, he had served in the Royal Navy, he knew what discipline and duty was, and also what a ship, however small, should be. He managed to make his little craft, the *Grebe*, a perfect picture. There was not much brass work about her to be sure, but what there was positively shone like gold; wood work was polished, the decks kept almost as white as the keys of a piano, and the mast, topmast, and jib-boom scraped till they looked like bleached straw.

The sails, too, were white and bonnie, and every rope was coiled on deck and kept in its place.

Well, there was a cabin or cuddy amidship, and here the children and Antonio dined if a shower came on, otherwise on deck, in true sailor fashion.

They all liked this plan best, because they could

throw over crumbs and suet to the lovely sea-mews and gulls, that had followed them from home.

Even a rook or two were among these, for strange as it may appear, rooks on the sea-coast often learn to be sea-birds. They are very awkward at first, and often nearly choke themselves in picking crumbs off the water, and they have a difficulty in rising again.

Perhaps, reader, there is a kind of cousinly friendship existing between seaside rooks and gulls; for while the former visit the sea, the two can often be seen walking side by side on a dewy morning, feeding on the grubs and slugs to be found in a field of growing turnips.

The Dane was dressed in sailor white, with black tie and sailor knot, and would have looked smart enough had he not been of so retiring a disposition.

It must be remembered that, till this day, the Danes are splendid, daring sailors, and can fight till further orders.

Does your knowledge of history, reader mine, date back to or include the great battle of the Baltic, fought by Nelson against the Danes. The song written by Campbell about this battle is a great favourite with me. I cannot help here transcribing it.

Learn it, lads, especially if you are going to be sailors. There is a ring of daring and true courage about both words and music, that I have never known surpassed.

It is a song that a man may sing while a lady plays the accompaniment. But listen :

“ Like leviathans afloat,
Lay their bulwarks on the brine ;
While the sign of battle flew
On the lofty British line.
It was ten of April morn by the chime :
As they drifted on their path
There was silence deep as death,
And the boldest held his breath,
For a time.

But the might of Britain flushed
To anticipate the scene ;
And her van the fleeter rushed
O'er the deadly space between.
' Hearts of oak ! ' our captain cried ; when each gun
From its adamant lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

Again ! again ! again !
And the havoc did not slack,
Till a feeble cheer the Dane,
To our cheering sent us back ;—
Their shots along the deep slowly boom :—
Then ceased—and all is wail,
As they strike the shattered sail ;
Or, in conflagration pale,
Light the gloom.—

.
Now joy, dear Britain, raise !
For the tidings of thy might,
By the festal cities' blaze,
Whilst the wine-cup shines in light ;

And yet amidst that joy and uproar,
 Let us think of them that sleep,
 Full many a fathom deep,
 By thy wild and stormy steep,
 Elsinore !—

(Last verse to be sung with great feeling.)

Brave hearts ! to Britain's pride
 Once so faithful and so true,
 On the deck of fame that died ;—
 With the gallant good Riou ;¹
 Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave !
 While the billow mournful rolls,
 And the mermaid's song condoles,
 Singing glory to the souls
 Of the brave !—”

Now, I don't want to drink tea with the boy, or girl either, who cannot appreciate this soul-stirring song ; but for him or her who can love it, I have two hands to hold out to shake.

Just one day, and only one, during all their delightful cruises in the good little yacht *Grebe* were our heroes and heroines in real danger.

There is no gainsaying the fact that a summer storm in the Channel is a very ugly one while it lasts.

Captain Antonio, lured by the loveliness of the June day, had put further out to sea than usual on this cruise, and the children were in the seventh heaven of delight. There had just been wind enough

¹ Captain Riou, who fell in this battle, was called the gallant and good by Lord Nelson in his despatches home to the Admiralty.

blowing from the south-west to carry the vessel along at probably seven knots an hour.

It was a beam wind, of course, and would be so on the other tack returning.

"If we put about now, dearies," said Antonio, "we'll just get home in beautiful time, and before the red sun dips behind the western waves."

A few minutes after, however, he found himself mistaken. Dark clouds rose rapidly up in the west and soon obscured the sun.

Both the Dane and Antonio knew the meaning of this, and the latter gave instant orders to set a storm-jib, and close reef the mainsail.

The girls were sent below in charge of Barclay, but Davie Drake put on an oilskin that he owned, and a yellow sou'-wester, and expressed his desire to stay on deck and see "the fun," as he called it.

In ten minutes more the squall was on them in all its force. It was furious, terrible. Nothing could withstand it. The sheets were therefore loosened, the topsail lowered, and they commenced to scud before the wind.

Hatches were put close on, for the great green seas raced the *Grebe* and threatened every moment to poop her, while the salt spray dashed on board in clouds.

The force of this first squall was soon broken however, but around our shores, a squall of this kind is generally, as Antonio knew, followed by a gale. So it would be in this case, for the glass had gone down,

down, down, and the column of mercury was still cup-shaped at top.

The gale too that sprang up and raised the seas higher and higher had a little bit of northerly in it, so that it would have been almost impossible to make for an English port.

"What do you advise, Petersen?" asked the captain, fixing him with his wonderful glass eye.

"There's only one thing to do, sir, and that is to run for Dieppe, in France."

"My own idea precisely."

"One hundred and eighty miles, though," he added. "The children will be safe, unless worse happens; but I grieve to think of the anxiety of their parents."

"Humph!" grunted Petersen, "a little grief does gentlefolks good."

I fear Petersen did not love gentlefolks, as he called them.

Antonio scowled a little, but as Petersen did not look up, the scowl was wasted.

"Take the tiller, Pandoo, till I run down below."

He entered the cuddy looking very happy and pleased, though this was only good acting. There was indeed a great fear at his heart that none of them should ever reach Dieppe alive. He entered, rubbing his hands and smiling.

"Well, dearies all, are you enjoying your little selves?"

They were indeed. They were as merry as May bees.

"Oh," said little Teenie delightedly, "it is so nicee— nicee. Just puts me in mind of our boats far away at sea, or a swing under the apple-trees at home."

"We're all happy, sir," said Maud and Phœbe both.

"Will we soon be in?" said bold young Barclay.

"Oh, dearie, no, we're going before the wind right away to bonnie France."

"Hurrah!" cried Barclay; "that is awfully jolly."

Then his face fell somewhat.

"What will dear mother think, though?"

"It will only be for one night, my lad. As soon as we reach Dieppe we'll telegraph, you know."

Then away to a cupboard walked or rather staggered the weird wee man. First he lit the big swing-lamp, for already gloaming was falling over the sea.

As he lit the lamp, Antonio chanted or sang in his sweetest tones:

"The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in its flight,

.
And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

.
The cat Muffie did not seem to mind the wild storm now raging and rushing the sloop before it, with many a dull thud that shook her from stem to stern.

Pussy was singing herself to sleep, with half-closed eyes that refused to keep awake.

Having lit the lamp, Antonio put the fiddles¹ on the table, and over this spread the table-cloth.

In the nests thus formed, and in front of each child, he placed a handful of nuts and apples.

Then he said, "Good-bye, dearies. Laugh and be happy. By-and-by I'll be down to play and sing to you."

"Oh," cried Teenie, "that will be nice!"

She clapped her hands, and so did the others.

There was still light enough on deck to see well around one; but Pandoo now, at his master's command, lit a huge hurricane lantern, and hoisted it to the masthead.

The faithful fellow had discarded his turban, and was fain to encase himself in an oilskin coat and wear a big sou'-wester, in which costume, it must be confessed, his brown but handsome face did not show out to any great advantage.

Meanwhile the wind seemed to increase. Above the howling of it, however, could now and then be heard the shrieks of the sea-birds. "Good-night! Good-night!" they seemed to cry—"we're away, away—away—ay!"

Nothing could daunt Antonio.

His heart was resilient to a degree, and when the

¹ Cross pieces of wood and strings to prevent the dishes sliding off.

wind blew the highest, he sang. He did even now, though only a verse or two:

“ The twilight is sad and cloudy,
The wind blows wild and free,
And like the wings of sea-birds
Flash the white caps of the sea.”

CHAPTER VII

“YES, YES,” SHE WEPT, “ON A FEARFUL NIGHT
LIKE THIS THEY WERE ALL DROWNED”

ALL that day the *Grebe* flew on before the wind. Even with the shortened sail that she carried, she must at times have been making twelve knots an hour.

The sun went down and down. You could only have told his position by the coppery hue of the clouds in the western sky, which swallowed up his every ray.

The wind was now somewhat more on the port quarter.

Just as gloaming was darkling into night, the Dane himself being at the wheel, he mistook some order Captain Antonio gave, for the storm was roaring loud and high. The little vessel had gone off somewhat, and instead of going hard a-port, he hove the helm the other way. In another moment the mainsail was aback and the danger extreme. Halliards were neatly let go however, and by Antonio himself and Pandoo everything was done for the safety of the vessel. But not before the saucy *Grebe* had gone stem on into an enormous wave. For a few moments indeed it seemed as if she were plunging beneath the waves entirely.

She shook herself free at last, but had shipped tons and tons of green water.

This came rolling aft, carrying Pandoo, Antonio, and poor Davie Drake before it, as a mill-lead might carry corks away.

They grasped the grating abaft the binnacle for life or death, and this saved them from being washed overboard.

But they were all more or less badly bruised, although when the danger was once over, and the vessel again on the scud, they all laughed heartily at the mishap.

Davie Drake was bold. All young sailors are, simply because they do not know their danger. Antonio and Pandoo had crossed too many wild seas in the Indian Ocean and around the Capes, and encountered too many hurricanes and tornadoes, to be afraid of the chops of the Channel.

Before sunset they had come across several barques and brigs, that seemed in a worse plight than even they were.

Just at darkling they noticed the coloured lights of a steamer coming hand and hand up astern.

This big vessel was soon close aboard of them to windward, and a lusty voice shouted—

“Whither away?”

“Dieppe.” This was the answer shrieked through Antonio’s speaking trumpet.

“Want any assistance?” cried the voice from the steamer.

"Many thanks, no. We're all square now."

And away went the steamer, and night swallowed her up.

After the men on deck had wrung their clothes and put them on again, Antonio went quietly below to see how the children were getting on.

Happy childhood, that knows nought of sorrow and danger.

"Oh, we've had such fun," cried Maud and Phœbe; "when the ship kicked, we were all thrown in a heap on the floor, but we were not hurt; only, our legs and arms were all so mixed up that we couldn't tell whose was who's. And then, Captain Antonio, when we tried to get up we all tumbled down again, so we just lay still for a long, long time. Wasn't it funny?"

Teenie had said nothing, she was looking very demure.

"Well, dearie, what have you to say?"

The little fisher lass looked up in his face with a half-serious smile.

"Is it all right now?" she said. "Barclay Stuart there, and Miss Maud, and Phœbe are only land folk; but I know—oh, *I* know."

"Well, dearie, what do you know?"

"We were taken aback."

Antonio himself was rather taken aback to hear such wisdom from the lips of this pretty wee mite of a fisher lass.

"Yes, we were taken aback, and it was touch and go. Wonder we didn't go down by the stern."

Antonio laughed, and patted her on the head.

"We are all right now, little one," he said, "and I'll be on deck all night. Yes, I'll come down to supper, and maybe sing you a song. Be good now."

"Oh yes, I'll be good," said Teenie, "just frightfully good, but——"

"Well, dearie?"

"I'll keep my weather eye lifting."

.

There certainly was danger on the deep to-night.

"The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last ;
The rattling showers rose on the blast ;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed ;
Loud, deep, and long the thunder bellowed."

These lines are by Burns, and are descriptive of a storm on shore ; yet they fall far short of depicting the scene around the seemingly doomed sloop *Grebe*. About an hour after, Antonio once more went on deck.

The thunder did indeed bellow, and the lightning was so incessant, that the little craft appeared sailing through a sea of fire. The waves too had risen, and were now houses high. On top of one of these the *Grebe* quivered from stem to stern, like a creature in fear and agony. She almost hesitated to take the awful plunges into the trough between the waves. Once down the waves dashed high over her, and for a moment or two the sails were all a-shiver.

Antonio himself took a trick at the wheel, that the Dane might go below for supper and refreshment. In

Antonio's hands the craft behaved better, and seemed to feel the master-touch.

In an hour's time Petersen came back.

Pandoo had already managed to relight the fire, and was busy cooking a delightful little supper for his master and the children.

Davie Drake, wet as he was, refused to go below. He was brave, this boy, without doubt; but let me whisper, reader—he was also affected by the motion. None of the girls were, nor was Barclay himself.

It was nearly nine by the clock, or two bells in the first watch, before Antonio got below.

But, considering everything, that really was a cosy little supper. Of course there were times when everybody had to let their plates lie in the fiddle-nests, that they might hold on fast to the table.

While the children were still enjoying their fruit, Antonio got out his guitar. The weird little man would have gone nowhere on earth without his guitar. And now its sweet, sad tones were heard high above the howling of the wind and the roar of the merciless waves.

It was sea songs he sang to-night, and the seas that beat against the vessel's side like muffled drums, formed a terrible but appropriate accompaniment.

It was a strange scene that, down below in the *Grebe's* cabin on this night of storm and tempest. The weird wee man, with that uncanny eye of his, that seemed to transfix the skylight as he sat on the locker; the eager face of the handsome boy Barclay and the three

wee girls listening so intently, as if afraid to lose a single note.

Somehow or other, little Teenie's tears were falling.

One farewell sigh breathed over the strings, and the music stopped. Antonio laid down the instrument and beckoned Teenie towards him.

"Why does dearie cry?"

She buried her bonnie face on his shoulder now and sobbed—

"Because—because," she replied, "poor uncle was drowned and all in the boat—last—year. Oh, I—loved poor unkie. And—and——"

"And my singing and the roar of the waves brought back the recollection—eh, dearie?"

"Yes—yes," she wept, "on a fearful night they were all drowned."

Antonio petted and soothed her, till she fell fast asleep. Then he placed her and Maud in his own bunk, put Phoebe to bed on the little sofa, while, rolled in rugs, Barclay turned in on the locker.

Antonio lowered the lamp that swung from the roof. Then he once more took up his guitar; that which he played now was a strange Indian lullaby, plaintive, sweet, and low.

It had the desired effect, and soon those innocent children were lulled to dreamless slumber.

Then the little brown captain scrambled on deck once more.

The storm still raged on unabatedly; there was not a star to be seen. All around the dark horizon seemed

close aboard of them, and nothing was visible save the white caps of the wind-tossed waves.

Antonio found that poor young Davie Drake had gone to sleep forward with his head on a coil of ropes; but Pandoo had covered him entirely up with a tarpaulin.

All that night long, the *Grebe* went scudding on before the gale; but when daylight appeared, grey and uncertain, the clouds began to lift in the west, and by-and-by a red saturnine light in the cloudland of the east showed that the sun had already risen.

And lo! land was in sight.

Only like a cloud as yet, far away on the eastern horizon.

So on and on flew the saucy *Grebe*, and hope, that had almost sank in the breasts of the three men on deck, began to rise.

In two hours more the vessel was nearly abreast of Dieppe.

But worse was to follow. At sea, there is nothing certain except the unexpected.

A squall was seen bearing down on them, of greater violence than any they had yet encountered.

Petersen was doing his trick at the wheel. Pandoo and Antonio stood holding on by the stays, when suddenly that awful black squall struck the vessel. For a few seconds she reeled and staggered like a stricken deer.

Luckily axes were on deck.

“Quick, Pandoo, quick,” shouted Antonio. “Get

the bight of a rope round you, fasten one end to a belaying-pin, and mount the bulwark to cut through the shrouds while I cut the mast."

Pandoo, with all the agility of a panther, did as he was bid.

But none too soon.

"Now," cried the captain, "strike when I give the order.

"Away, aloft."

Pandoo, secure now from falling overboard, mounted the bulwark.

Antonio, also fastened by a rope to the little capstan, stood by to hack the mast.

It was a pretty bit of seamanship, but would it succeed?

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE MERCY OF THE WAVES

“ALL ready, Pandoo?”

“All ready, sah,” shouted Pandoo, aloft on the bulwark, his long dark-brown ringlets streaming out before the wind, and half hiding his handsome face.

“Heave ho, my lad. Cheerily ho!”

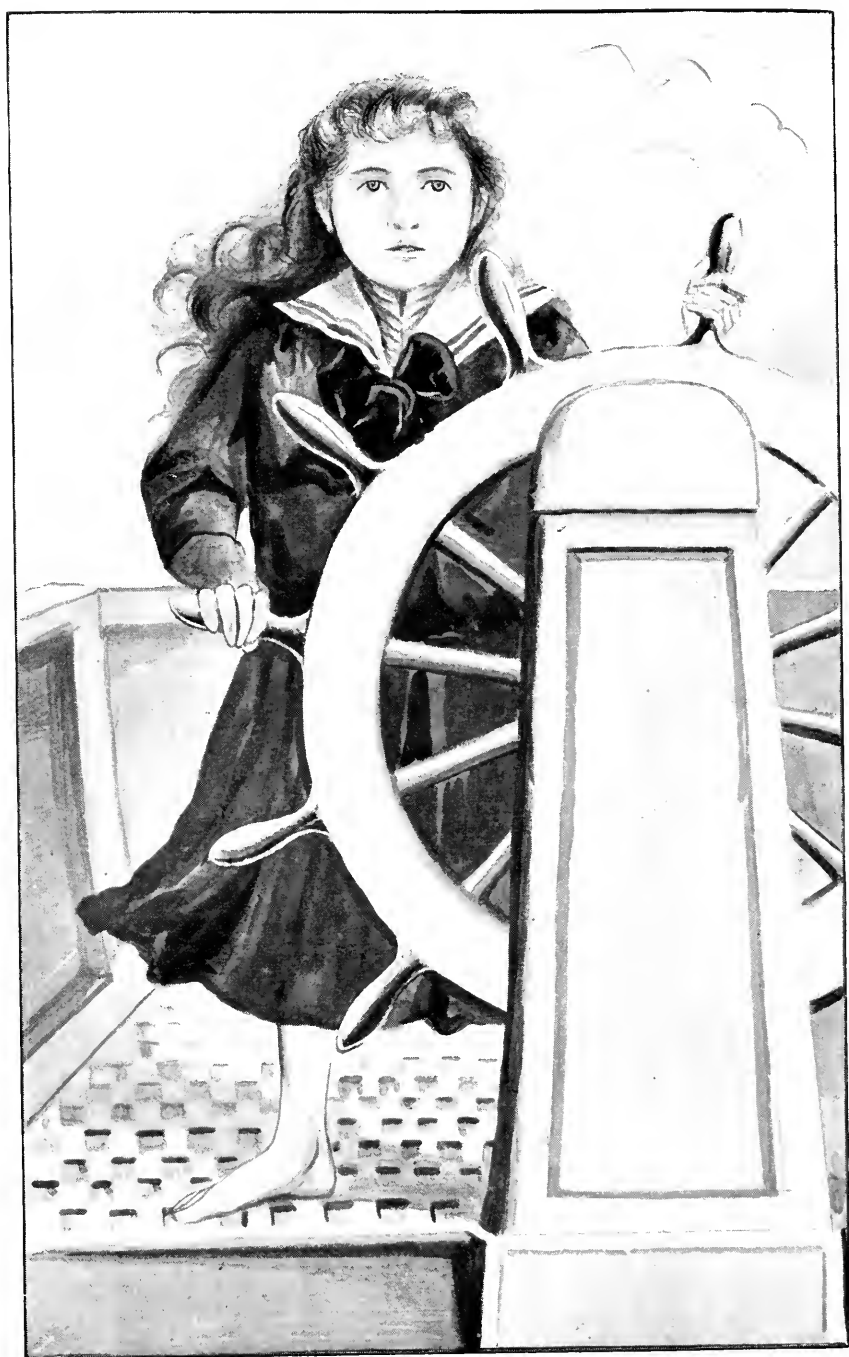
Bang, bang. Both axes fell almost at the same moment.

Antonio’s had buried itself in the sturdy mast; Pandoo’s had cut a shroud almost in two.

It was dangerous work, for Pandoo especially. But for the rope he had made fast in a bight around his body, one end firmly belayed to a pin below, he would undoubtedly have fallen into the sea.

Hack, hack; chop, chop.

Three shrouds are severed. The mast wavers, staggers, and finally goes down by the board, smashing in its fall the starboard bulwarks. Down leaps Pandoo now, and throwing the bight of the rope off over his head, lays lustily on at the other shrouds, and soon the mast, which was acting as a battering-ram, and might easily have stove the little craft, was now free, and floated away to windward.



TEENIE STEERING.—Page 83.

The vessel had slowly righted ; but deprived of all sail save the storm-jib, she was but a mere rolling log in the billowy ocean.

The position of the vessel was now dangerous in the extreme.

And yet in the midst of all the danger something had occurred which caused both the captain and trusty Pandoo to laugh most heartily.

"Oh, look—look, sah, look," cried Pandoo, pointing aft with his brown hand.

Antonio did look, and lo ! there on the weather side of the wheel, holding the spokes as naturally as any old sailor could have done, stood Teenie, the wee fisher lassie, with her short red frock, bare feet, and hair floating free on the wind.

A most beautiful picture she looked, as contrasted with the stern-set features and form of the sturdy Dane.

But even he could not help smiling.

Antonio ran aft.

"O my dearie, dearie," he cried, "you must go below."

Her red lips parted in a bonnie smile, while her blue eyes danced with fun and merriment.

"Oh," she answered, "it is nothing. I only came up to help poor Pete. I often and often steer my daddy's boat."

Antonio stooped down and kissed her hair, then led her gently below.

Here he found Barclay busy restoring things to

order. They had been in a state of chaos, but no one was hurt.

Not even Muffie the honest cat, who was sitting on the top of the table singing, and apparently as happy as a viking of old.

The danger of broaching to was now very great, and it took a load off the little captain's mind when he at last discovered a French tug-boat bearing down to their assistance.

In half-an-hour more they were safe and sound in Dieppe harbour.

No sooner had Antonio landed the girls and seen them safely to a good hotel under Pandoo's charge, than he hastened to cable to Fisherton.

What a relief these cablegrams were to Parson Grahame, Mrs. Stuart, and Teenie's father I need hardly say. Teenie's father—Norton by name—was a simple, but sturdy fisherman. He and his wife had knelt down before retiring, and prayed earnestly for the safety of the *Grebe*.

"They are in Thy hands, O Father in heaven. Thou who canst hold the ocean in the hollow of Thy hand, will protect and save the *Grebe*, and watch over the life of our little Teenie. Have we not always trusted Thee, our Heavenly Father, and Thou hast never deserted us? Nor wilt Thou now, for our Saviour's sake. Amen! and Amen!"

Then they arose from their knees, happy and trusting, even cheerful.

“Shall we sing a hymn, Peter?”

“Ay! that we will. You begin it, lass. You sings like an angel. I’ve but a poor voice, hoarse with roarin’ high above the stormy wind.”

“Ay, Peter, ay.”

The grey-haired old body chose that loveliest hymn that e’er was penned, and as she came to the most beautiful of all the verses in it, for just a moment her voice broke and trembled, and the tears came dropping from her eyes.

“O spread thy covering wings around,
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father’s loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace.”

.

But Parson Grahame had gone to Mrs. Stuart’s house to comfort her.

All comfort seemed useless. She hardly ever seated herself, but paced the room, up and down, up and down, all the livelong night, and till morn dawned bleak and grey over the bleak and stormy ocean.

“Something tells me they are safe,” said the good parson.

But she only wrung her hands.

The cablegram came at last by special messenger.

Mrs. Stuart dared not open it. She stood like a ghost in front of Mr. Grahame as he tore it open. Weary, grey, and haggard she was, but strangely enough, when she heard the joyful tidings of the safety of the *Grebe* she fainted dead away.

When she recovered she cried a little, then happiness was restored.

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Antonio made up his mind to give the children what the Yankees call a real good time of it while the damages to the *Grebe* were being repaired and a new, strong mast stepped.

The men hurried on with their work, and were finished therewith in a few days.

There wasn't a show nor a play in the place that Antonio did not take the children to. He had bought a dress for little Teenie, and boots and shoes, with all of which she was immensely taken, and pleased.

"I'se a lady now," she said, smiling her prettiest as she surveyed herself in the glass.

Ah! she did not know yet that it takes more than dress to make a lady.

Barclay Stuart looked at her with real admiration; but I think the boy after all would have preferred to have seen her on the sandy beach at Fisherton, in her bare feet, and with basket and fishing bag, ready to accompany him to the foot of the wild cliffs.

The *Grebe* was ready for sea once more, and the children's holiday, which had really in one way been idyllic, was at an end.

Softly blew the southern wind, and light and gentle were the sparkling wavelets as the sails of the *Grebe* were once more shaken out, and she went dancing

and curtseying over the sea, bound for the shores of bonnie Devon.

One long day and night at sea—a happy day and night the children were never likely to forget—and they once more made Fisherton Bay and its tiny pier.

And happy, too, was the meeting 'twixt the parents and the lost children ! I can't describe that.

“ Oh,” said old Norton, “ I knew they would be safe, because somehow He ”—Norton's finger pointed to the blue sky—“ He always hears our prayers like, that is, mother's and mine.”

But the children had many more cruises in the *Grebe* after this, though they did not go quite so far to sea.

Their parents had the greatest faith in Antonio, and in Pandoo also.

Only somehow no one seemed to like or trust Petersen the Dane. His brows were always lowered. He appeared to shun conversation, and, as I said before, he never looked any one in the face.

Yet was he a brave and truly excellent sailor.

Sometimes Antonio dined at Parson Grahame's house, and the good man was astonished at the amount of the captain's knowledge, of not only the arts and sciences, especially electricity, but of astronomy also.

Grahame could have sat and listened to his conversation for a week and not felt tired. It must be confessed, however, that he would have listened with

more pleasure had it not been for that uncanny eye of Antonio's.

Often while talking he would put his fingers over it, as if quite conscious of the disagreeable effect it had on those who beheld it.

Time rolled on.

Antonio seemed to have no other desire save that of studying and preparing, as he told young Drake and Barclay, for a long, long voyage to sea.

Both boys had made great progress in their knowledge of seamanship, and before mellow autumn came on they could not only splice, steer, reef a topsail, and box the compass, but had a fairly good knowledge of plain sailing.

When autumn clothed the far-off moors and hills in purple and crimson, a grand picnic was arranged.

Pandoo was the caterer. A great waggon was specially chartered for the occasion. Mrs. Stuart and Parson Grahame both were among the passengers, and so away and away they drove up hills and down dells, but especially up, till high above the ocean they found themselves among scenery as charming, as one can find anywhere in the south of Merrie England.

Lonesome enough, though!

Great birds that the children had never seen before sailed round and round in the air, uttering strange, wild screams; others sat on stones and rocks, eyeing the intruders with curiosity.

But there were beautiful gulls as well.

"I wonder," said Antonio, "if these are any of my windmill friends? Sit still, dearies, and I will soon find out."

He had brought the wings with him. And now he filled his pocket with biscuit and pie crust, and walking some distance off, sat down on a stone.

He uttered his peculiar cry, and waved the wings.

Tack and half tack, nearer and nearer came the lovely gulls, some black-headed, some black-backed, some nearly white.

At last they alighted around him, ay, and on him. They fed from his hand, and one bolder than the rest actually took crumbs from his mouth.

"Mrs. Stuart," said Parson Grahame, "that is a truly wonderful man. Do you know that I am sometimes actually afraid of him? Especially does that uncanny eye of his make my flesh creep at times, when it fixes me. And I dare not run away."

"I like him," said Mrs. Stuart, with a quiet smile.

"Well, I am glad; I must say that his conversation is very delightful. He is quite a *savant*, and he is also a hypnotist."

Back came Antonio. His birds had been kissed and blest, and had flown away.

Then at Mrs. Stuart's request, backed up by the voices of the happy children, Antonio produced his guitar, and never did he play more sweetly—

sometimes sadly even to pathos—nor sing more clearly.

His voice and the breaking music of the sad guitar died away in softest cadence at last, and for a few seconds no one spoke, so full were their hearts. When they did speak, it was only to say, “Oh, thank you, captain, thank you.”

But Antonio knew children well, and knew therefore that very sad music hardly accorded with their hearts.

So he seized the guitar once again.

“Dance, dearies, dance,” he cried merrily, as he struck up a beautiful Italian waltz.

It was a charming and delightful sight to see those children dancing in their gleefulness on the smooth green sward. Davie Drake chose Phoebe for his partner, and Barclay had little Teenie.

But Pandoo went gallantly to Maud’s rescue, and so the dancing was kept up, until the bairns were fain to throw themselves on the sward through sheer fatigue.

Then Antonio stowed away the guitar, and shortly after this, and just as the sun began to wester, preparations for the return voyage, as Antonio called it, were made and completed.

But even as they came down the long hill that leads into Fisherton the weird wee man played and sang again, and Maud and Phoebe joined in with their sweet, though childish treble.

Everybody admitted to-night and for many a day

afterwards that they had never enjoyed so delightful an outing.

And now the weather began to get dull and gloomy. The clouds every day banked high above the horizon, and arched the very heavens with their grey-black rolling *cumulus*. As far as could be seen southwards the ocean was dull and troubled. The sea-birds screamed their loudest, and, caught by the wind at times while high in air, appeared to be whirled away at its mercy, and *nolens volens*.

Winter was coming on apace!

But the boys appeared regularly every day notwithstanding, and often Antonio took them far to sea, even when it was blowing half a gale.

He told the lads that he wished them to become real sailors, and not feather-bed, long-shore chaps, who didn't know how to handle even a dinghy in a puff of wind.

By this time Davie Drake himself had found his sea-legs, and Antonio was pleased, not only with his general knowledge of seamanship, but of navigation as well.

Davie went home every night; Barclay of course remained with his captain, and slept in his little bedroom, high aloft above the beautifully furnished drawing-room.

Sometimes—just when she thought of it—bare-headed, bare-footed little Teenie came toddling over to the windmill.

"Just to hear Mr. 'Tonio sing—sing and play," she explained.

And 'Tonio, as she always called him, never disappointed her.

Then Barclay himself would take her home. She refused point-blank to have the escort of Davie Drake, though she was far indeed from disliking the boy.

"I *likes* you, Davie," she would say, slipping one wee hand softly into Barclay's, "but I *loves* Barclay."

This was spoken with all the innocence and frankness of childhood.

But it was no wonder that these children loved each other so well; were they not constantly together? And there was a third little person always with them. This was poor Muffie. She had not the slightest fear of dogs of her own size, and if they were saucy, she had a quick and simple method of putting them to rout. Up went her hair from crown to tail; for just a moment she did an attitude that was certainly more determined than graceful.

Then if the doggie did not at once beat a retreat, she struck out straight from the shoulder, and ten to one the enemy ran off howling with a breaking heart and a bleeding eye.

But if a collie or retriever appeared she sprang at once into Barclay's arms, and spat defiance at the foe from this safe encampment.

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The hermit of the old windmill did not mind the advance of winter; the stormier seas, the moan and

the sough of the wilder winds, the shrieks of the birds—all seemed to appeal to his soul, and he might have said with Burns :

“The sweeping blast, the sky o’ercast,
The joyless winter day
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May.
The tempest’s howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join ;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine.”

Captain Antonio seemed to have completed his studies in electricity. Week after week huge strange-shaped parcels had been brought to him from the distant railway station, and busy indeed had been his hammer, his chisel, and many strange tools that the boys who assisted him did not even know the names of.

But in one huge parcel Barclay marvelled to see two complete suits of diver’s dresses and armour.

There was some mystery in this, which Antonio promised he would explain when they were once well out to sea.

Another mystery was a kind of diving-box ; almost, if not quite, as large was this as the lifts used at hotels.

The weird little man had taken infinite pains with this. It was not round, but square, with a kind of cut-water roof, which would enable it to rise at once to the surface of the water. Through the bottom ran a rope, to which ballast could be attached in sinking this curious house. The aperture was water-tight. When

it was desired to ascend, the rope, which was very long, and belayed inside, could be let go. The house would then speedily ascend, and the ballast could be hauled up afterwards.

I may add that the whole apparatus was detachable for packing. It was caulked, as it were, with india-rubber, and could be so firmly screwed together, that not a drop of water could find its way inside.

Air could be pumped in from above. True, but Antonio did not depend wholly upon this, for he possessed the means of generating oxygen, so that two people might live comfortably at the sea-bottom for many hours at a time.

Finally, the whole was lit up with electricity. On one side was a search-light of enormous power, and this side was a solid sheet of the thickest glass.

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The winter passed away, and sweet spring began to paint the ground with the greenery of grass, and the many and varied colours of beautiful wild-flowers.

Barclay was not sorry, for often in the dreary winter nights he used to lie in his little bed, finding it impossible to sleep while the storm-winds howled and "howthered" around his strange dwelling, and often shook it to its very foundations.

Barclay was a trifle superstitious, and the most appalling noises used to be heard aloft—shrieks and groans and moans.

He could not explain the nature of them. It might really be ghosts, he thought, and trembled a little.

But on calmer nights nothing was heard except the mournful cry of the great white owl, who had not given up her abode, seeming to have perfect confidence in Antonio as well as in Barclay Stuart.

One fine day, when the buds were green on the trees, and bird-song was heard in every bush, Antonio told Barclay that he was going on a little cruise as far as London, and that he might not be back for a day or two.

The old windmill was locked up therefore, and for a whole week nothing was heard of the mysterious and weird little captain.

But behold one fine morning——

No, on second thoughts, I'll tell you what *did* happen in next chapter.

CHAPTER IX

*“THE MORN WAS FAIR, THE SKY WAS CLEAR,
NO BREATH CAME O’ER THE SEA”*

THESE are the first two lines of that grand old sea-song, “The Rose of Allandale,” but they also make a very good commencement to this chapter of mine.

The morn was indeed fair, the sky cloudless, and the sea as calm as a mill-pond; a study, too, it was in blue, with patches of green where the sand showed through, patches of darkest brown near to the shore, where the sea-weed floated on the waves like mermaids’ hair.

Barclay and Davie had met each other at seven o’clock, had bathed together, and were now high up among the braes, and far above Mrs. Stuart’s little cottage.

They were bird-nesting.

But, pray, do not mistake me. They were not lads of the guttersnipe class, who find nests but to rob them. Both had good mothers, who had taught them that God loves His song-birds, ay, even to the bickering sparrow, “not one of which shall fall to the ground without the Father,” that is, unless He permits it.

But there were nests of all kinds in every bush and tree: the linnet in the golden-scented furze—ah! how sweet and tender his song; the blackbird in the hedge; the cosy wee wren’s nest, perhaps in the cleft of some hollow tree; the dove in the thickets of spruce, who purred all day long like a cat; the loud liltling mavis with her greenish blue and black-spotted eggs; the chaffinch’s nest, the prettiest in the world, in a notch in the lichen-covered larch; the hedge-sparrow’s, with eggs of sweetest blue. Oh, but I could not mention half the nests they visited this morning.

But some, such as those of the chattering magpie and the hawk, were high up in old pine trees, so that—

“When the wind blew, the cradle would rock.”

For two hours they wandered about in woods and wilds, and then the wind did begin to blow.

Barclay was away on the top of one of the highest pine-trees, where a “hoody crow’s” nest swayed and swung; he had brought some morsels of meat for the poor bird, and these he deposited on a branch.

He stayed a little to look about him from his glorious elevation. Then he shouted, sailor-fashion—

“Below, there!”

“Ay, ay,” cried Davie Drake.

“Sail in sight.”

“Where away?”

“Just rounding the eastern point. Now she has her helm down, and is steering directly for the bay.”

“What does she look like?”

"A long, low, black barque, all sail set, and studsails low and aloft. Masts have a bit of a rake. Oh, she is a beauty."

Davie Drake was by this time coming hand over hand up the tree, and it was not long before both boys came to the conclusion that the barque must belong to Captain Antonio, and to no one else.

They came down below now quickly enough, and soon stood once more on *terra firma*.

Then off they trotted down hill, and were at the pier-head just as the anchor was let go, the cable rattling and roaring overboard, and the barque swinging to the tide.

What a happy meeting that was! The weird wee captain rubbed his hands in glee as he pointed to his bonnie barque.

"Isn't she a beauty, boys, fore and aft? Look at her, lads. From stem to stern she'll bear the scrutiny of the best sailor ashore or afloat.

"And that is your ship too, you know, and soon we'll sail away to make our fortunes."

"Yes, insured to the full, and may be over. Oh, I know how to do business."

"Now we'll go to the hotel and have breakfast, for both you boys look hungry."

On the very next day, Captain Antonio began to load up the good barque *Zingara*, for that was her romantic name.

For this purpose the sloop came in handy. All the apparatus he had been working at for more than a year was safely carried beachward, taken off, and shipped and stowed. Nothing was left behind.

To the landlord of the inn was given the key of his castle, as Antonio called the old windmill, with orders to have fires in it frequently, to keep out the damp.

A good rig-out or kit was bought for both boys, and handsome they looked therein.

Everything being ready, a few days after this farewells were said.

Poor Davie Drake was an orphan without a friend in the world, so he could leave the shore with dry eyes; but sad indeed was the parting between Barclay and his mother, and many were the tears that were shed.

I myself do not like farewells, I do not even like to describe them.

So we must drop the curtain just here, and, when we next raise it, we will find ourselves far far at sea.

The crew all told were thirty; the ship was not only well stored with provisions, and with beads, bright cotton cloth, and notions of every sort likely to captivate the savages' fancy, but she was armed as well, both with rifles, cutlasses, and also with a good Armstrong gun, and war rockets.

They would probably have need of these in the wild seas and islands they were about to visit.

All the village assembled to see the good barque sail away, and as they moved slowly out of the bay they could hear the music and words of that grand old song, "Cheer, boys, cheer," come quavering over the rippling sea.

"Cheer, boys, cheer ! no more of idle sorrow ;
Courage, true hearts, shall bear us on our way ;
Hope points before, and shows the bright to-morrow ;
Let us forget the darkness of to-day.

So farewell, England ! much as we may love thee,
We'll dry the tears that we have shed before.
Why should we weep to sail in search of fortune ?
So farewell, England ! farewell for evermore."¹

¹ Both music and words of this bold song are generally ascribed to Henry Russell. The latter wrote the music ; a young Scottish poet, M'Lean, wrote the stirring words.

BOOK II

PEARL FISHING IN CANNIBAL ISLES

“ Adieu, adieu ! my native shore
Fades o’er the waters blue ;
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.
Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight ;
Farewell awhile to him and thee,
My native land—good night ! ”

—BYRON.

CHAPTER I

THE STOWAWAY

THE *Zingara* had been two days and nights at sea. Whatever might be her fate eventually, she had made a glorious start. The soft and balmy spring wind blew steadily from the west, no higher a breeze than that which a sailor loves, and no heavier a sea.

The waters around were of the darkest blue, and though now and then a white cap might appear on a wave-top, it seemed more in frolic than in anger.

With the wind well on the quarter, and the sails kept well full, though pretty close to it, the bonnie barque went bounding on, and that so merrily, too, that not only was there sunshine glittering on the rippling waves, but apparently sunshine in the heart of every man or boy on board.

The men kept walking briskly up and down from the main-mast to the fo'cas'le, laughing and talking, but never in a loud key, for Antonio, though certainly no martinet, was a strict disciplinarian, and liked to see duty carried on with almost man-o'-war regularity and coolness.

It was the mate's watch this morning. He was a sturdy, broad-shouldered, and fair-haired young Cornishman; and always did a sunny smile beam over his face when talking to one, unless, of course, when carrying on duty: then he stood no nonsense.

Never a speaking-trumpet needed Archie Webber. His stentorian voice could have been heard low and aloft in the wildest weather. One, to hear him shouting thus on deck, would have thought him angry. Not so; anger seldom found comfortable quarters in Webber's breast.

The Cornishmen are a bold race and a hardy. They were, I am told, originally Celts. As I write, these lines, which I have heard or read somewhere, keep running in my mind—

. . . "And shall Trelawney die?

Then thirty thousand Cornishmen shall know the reason why.'

I haven't the faintest idea who Trelawney was, or what he had done; but it is pretty evident his plucky countrymen had made up their minds that he should not suffer death.

The mate, then, was a beau-ideal Cornishman, and wasn't ashamed of it either.

As I have introduced the first mate, I may as well bring the second in front of the footlights. Antonio was not particular as to the nationality of his men or officers, so long as he was convinced they could do their duty, and were sober and

obedient to command. So Patrick M'Koy was an active and merry little Irishman. He was almost too active indeed, and when he went on watch things had to hum. He never lost his temper, except with any man he deemed a lubber, and then he did not confine himself to words. Perhaps on shore he was fond of the old game of Aunt Sally, a wooden image seen at shows, that you shy sticks at, you know, until you smash the short clay pipe in her old mouth.

Anyhow if a lubber—and there weren't many on board—provoked him, Paddy, as he was called for short, would instantly draw out a wooden belaying-pin, and send it whizzing forward along the deck with such precision that it invariably hit the lubber on his bare foot or ankle, and sent him hopping all over the deck.

“That'll tache ye, my boy,” he would say; then he would tell off another man to do the duty the lubber couldn't.

Both mates were favourites with Antonio, but I think Paddy “bore the gree.”

On board the *Zingara* Pandoo took rank as steward and general factotum. He had a boy under him, however, who did his duty fairly well, despite the fact that he was as fat as a flounder.

Johnnie Smart's eyes were never very large at the best, though his mouth was big enough almost to have taken the handle of a gardener's spade; but when Johnnie smiled, and held back his head and

towsy poll, those eyes simply disappeared entirely behind his rosy cheeks.

There would have been no good trying to convince Johnnie that he could possibly do any harm; and when, for example, Pandoo scolded him, he just held back his head and smiled, like a hippopotamus. If the joint slipped off the dish when he was bringing it aft from the cook, back went the head, the round fat face was turned skywards for a moment, and the broad hippopotamic smile took rank in open order, from ear to ear.

“My eye though!” he would say. “My eye and Betsy Martin!”

Then he would recover the joint from the leescuppers, replace it on the dish, and continue his journey.

Johnnie soon became a general favourite nevertheless.

But I wish now to tell you of a wonderful thing that happened on this bright and lovely morning.

For the first time since they had left shore, Pandoo had occasion to go to the storeroom, which lay right abaft the beautiful saloon on the star-board side.

As his hand was on the door-knob, to his intense surprise he thought he heard the sound of singing—sweet and low, inside.

Pandoo, like all his race, was superstitious in the extreme, and now his hair felt stirring beneath his turban.

He would have run right away to the other end of the ship if he could have done so, but he felt rooted to the spot. Nay, more, in spite of himself, he could not help applying his ear to the keyhole.

The music to his excited fancy appeared to be ineffably sweet and tender. The words he heard were these:—

“Not in mine innocence I trust ;
I bow before Thee in the dust :
And through my Saviour’s blood alone
I look for mercy at the throne.

I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I held so dear ;
To heal their sorrows, Lord, descend,
And to the friendless prove a friend.”

A long-drawn sigh followed.

Pandoo listened no more, but flew straight on deck. He was trembling all over.

“Oh, sah,” he gasped, “de storeroom——”

“Yes, yes, not on fire, is it?”

“No, sah, no ; but, sah, there is spirits in de store-room.”

Antonio laughed.

“Of course ; there is rum, a little brandy, and some wine, but what about that?”

“I not mean dat sort of spirit, sah, but spirit all same’s one angel, or cherub. Sing lubly too.”

Antonio and Archie Webber both began to think that poor Pandoo had gone out of his mind. Never-

theless the captain accompanied him down to the storeroom.

The singing had ceased, and so the weird wee man turned the key and walked boldly in. Next moment a barefooted little child in a short red dress had sprung into his arms.

"Oh, dear 'Tonio, I *is* so glad you *is* come. I think I soon die here all by myself in the dark."

"But, my child and dearie, how on earth did you come here at all?"

He had led her out into the sunlit and beautifully furnished saloon, and seated her beside him on the sofa.

"Tell us your little story, dear."

"Oh, that isn't nothing, you know; I've just runned away to sea because I love you, and the sea, and everything."

"I am puzzled what to do with you, dearie; I can't send you back."

"Oh, no, no, no," cried Teenie pleadingly.

Then Antonio burst into a hearty laugh.

"We'll do the best we can, dearie."

"An' I brought my best clothes in a box and all."

"I must do all I can for you, anyhow. Luckily there is a spare cabin close to mine, and you shall have a nice bed there. Come and I'll show you."

Teenie ran back into the dark storeroom for her box.

"Here is the room. There is the bed, and yonder is the washstand," said Antonio.

She clapped her hands with delight. "All like a fairy's house."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Antonio, "you're the drollest little stowaway ever I had. Wash now, dress neatly, and then come on deck."

Just the night before the *Zingara* sailed away from Fisherton Bay, Teenie, whose parents gave her a good deal of her own way, left her humble home, saying she was going to the parsonage, and would not be home till morning.

She kissed her parents "Good night," and they were somewhat surprised to see tears in her blue eyes. Her box was hidden in the garden, so away she went. Straight for the rectory she bent her tiny footsteps. Maud was all by herself in the best room.

She did not stay long here, but left a letter, making Maud promise—"just for fun," she said—not to open it till next afternoon.

Maud promised.

Then away went Teenie. It was dark when a little boat brought her alongside. She told the boatman not to wait, as a ship's dinghy would bring her on shore. Some men had seen her come on board, but naturally imagined she brought a message for the captain, who, however, was on shore.

The saloon was all dark, so she had had no difficulty in stowing herself away.

But the storeroom was afterwards locked, and she passed a dreary time. Then thinking she was going

to die, she began to sing her "death-bed hymn," as she termed it, and was thus engaged when Pandoo came upon the scene.

It was not until next evening that Maud opened the envelope. It contained a letter for Mr. Ch. Norton, and that was Teenie's father.

Then putting on her cloak, Maud at once hurried away with it to the fisherman's humble cottage.

It was quite a child's letter, but the tears trickled down the poor man's face as he read it to his wife and Maud.

Yes, quite a bairnie's letter, but sincere and frank in every respect.

Teenie was in the habit of carefully ruling her paper before she began to write—this kept things straight; but in the present case she had had no time to do it, so the caligraphy went sprawling, tack and half tack diagonally, across the sheet. The spelling of the words, too, was in some instances quite original, to say the least of it.

"Dear father and mother," the letter innocently began, "I'se runned away in 'Tonio's sip (ship). I loves 'Tonio not a little wee bit like my tiny finger, but as high as the steeple, and I loves pore Bacly Stoort, an' I loves pussy Malkin (Grimalkin¹), and I does love the sea and all the pretty sea-birds, oh! ever so much. You woodn't berlieve.

¹ "Grimalkin," *Scottice* = a cat.

“So dood-bye, mammy and daddie. When your little Teenie tomes back she’ll be a big big dirl, and I’s going to catch lots and lots of fisses for you, and draw big nets and all.

“I’m going to see all all the world, and all the wild beasts and pretty beasties in the book Pason Grahame gave me. Wild beasts don’t eat dood little dirks; do they, daddy? But in course I’s goin’ to say my players every, every, every night, just like this:—

“‘This night as I lie down to sleep,
I give my sole to Christ to keep;
If I shood die before I wake,
I pray that Christ my soul shood take.’

“God bless daddy and mammy, and make me a bootiful (? dutiful) chile to them. Amen!

“So dood-bye. You must keep my garden now, and not let the naty (? naughty) kats strape (scrape) all up my sweet peas. With love and lots of kisses × × × × ×.—I is still your offectionate dater,
“TEENIE.”

Our young heroes, Barclay and Davie, had been down below at lessons in the half-deck, or mess-place of the second-class officers, cooper, carpenter, bo’s’n, &c. The bo’s’n was, in ship-work, the teacher to these youngsters, while Antonio himself superintended the higher branches of their nautical education.

“A stowaway found!” said the cooper, entering the

half-deck. "The old man¹ has her. And a bonnie wee mite she is."

Barclay went on deck soon after him, but his astonishment may be conceived when Teenie herself ran forward to meet him.

"Oh, Teenie, how could you have done it!"

"Just to see all, all the world. That's how."

"And your parents——"

"Oh, they is all right, 'cause I wrote a letter to them. Now, I'm going to play with pussy; and by-and-by I'll come and play with you."

Next moment, Teenie was flying up and down the deck, falling sometimes—but that didn't matter—hauling a string and ball after her. Muffie the cat followed close behind, whacking the ball into the air whenever it alighted on deck.

Well, before four days were over, Teenie was the pet of the good ship *Zingara*. And sailors do like pets. The cat would have to play second fiddle, now.

In course of time they got into the trade winds, and the barque went bounding on; the same kind of wind day after day, and the same kind of rippling, half-choppy sea. But it sparkled like diamonds in the sun, though the shadow of each wave was of the darkest blue.

Few birds were seen at present, but now and then, to Teenie's intense delight, an over-tired gull would alight on a topsail yard, and a sailor would climb

¹ "Old man." The skipper of a merchantman is usually called so, whatever his age.

cautiously up, and, catching it, bring it down for the girl to nurse and smooth and pet. Pussy too took an interest in these birds of passage, but it was an interest of quite a different kind.

She used to square her moustache and lips, and emit a series of short little mews.

"What a lovely bird, Teenie!" she seemed to say. "Just put it down on deck till I see it. I wonder how it tastes."

When the bird had rested, Teenie kissed its poll, and let it fly away, to look for its mammy, as she phrased it.

But Mother Carey's chickens—the stormy petrels—used to dart from wave to wave, much to Teenie's delight. They were very beautiful, though as dark as ink, and the sounds they emitted were music to the child's ears.

Only *they* never came on board.

Southward and southward went the *Zingara*, and every one in the best of spirits, until they reached that most beautiful isle of the sea, Madeira.

Not only is it beautiful, but wild and grand in the extreme.

Here the ship was brought to anchor, and Antonio went on shore, leaving the vessel in charge of the mate.

A beach of great sea-smoothed boulders hurtles back and fore on this coast night and day, so that landing would indeed be difficult, if it were not that there are always plenty of willing hands—Portuguese

and half-castes—to rush forward and haul the boat high and dry.

Our young heroes—yes, we have three of them now—were enchanted with all they saw; and Antonio was delighted, because *they* were. The broad pavements shaded by awnings and green palm-trees, the curious shops, the strange but prettily dressed men and women—all were new to them, and put Barclay in mind of a scene in a pantomime he had once witnessed.

They had a light but well-cooked dinner in a beautiful hotel. The fruit itself was rich and rare.

But after dinner they were all carried in hammocks high up to the tops of the wild green mountains, and the view from here was like a scene of enchantment. Was ever sea so blue as that, though seemingly patched here and there with sunken islands of pearl, and green, and saffron? The sky above, with its pure white and filmy clouds, was a great factor in the scene; and afar off, seemingly afloat in the air above the horizon, were green islands, on which, Teenie at once told Barclay, fairies and elves *must* live.

“Oh,” said Teenie, clapping her tiny hands, “I is so glad I runned away from home.”

CHAPTER II

AT SEA

THE party, after descending the hill so far, completed the journey on sledges, a species of tobogganning that at first seems perilous in the extreme. A man stands behind on the sledge, and steers with one foot; the declivity is exceedingly steep, and the mad race downwards, a distance, as far as I can remember, of about a mile and a half, is accomplished in little over two minutes.

Yet I never heard of an accident taking place, or of any one being dashed against the stone wall.

Teenie sat on Antonio's knee, and kept her eyes closely shut, until the speed slackened, and they found themselves safely at the foot, and near the town.

And now they once more visited the hotel, and sitting out on a cool, tree-shaded verandah, thoroughly enjoyed the delicious iced sherbet and fruits placed before them.

But now the captain engages the landlord himself in conversation. They talk in the beautiful silvery language of Spain.

Then the landlord retires, and Antonio lights a

huge cigar. He tells the boys and Teenie to stroll up the streets for half-an-hour, and they gladly obey. Meanwhile the little skipper sits and thinks.

The waiter—polite to a fault—brings him paper, pen, and ink, and he writes several letters. One is to the honest fisherman, Teenie's father. You may easily guess what that was about. It finished up, however, with this sentence:—

“Be not uneasy. She is so happy night and day, and I will guard and protect her like the apple of my eye.”

He did not say which eye, but I dare say he did not refer to the demon eye, as some of the sailors on board were ill-mannered enough to call it.

Presently the affable little landlord returned, and with him a young lady of some twenty summers—a dark-eyed rather pretty brunette, with a tropically bronzed skin, and eye-lashes that swept her cheeks, and very neatly dressed.

“Not English?”

“No, Capitan, Español.”

“But you can talk good English?”

“Yes, I can both write and speak English, Señor.”

“Right! Has the good landlord told you everything?”

“Everything to me he has told; and I am willing to sail the seas. Been already to Rio and Buenos Ayres. Oh, good, all good! I shall teach and take care of your little child, and the wages will suit.”

She spoke volubly.

"See here," she added, "characters from many sweet Angleese ladies whom I have served."

Antonio just glanced at them, and was satisfied.

"You'll get ready, then; and I will call for you to-morrow."

Just then the children returned, and Antonio introduced Teenie to her maid and governess.

"You will love her, won't you?"

Teenie looked her all over critically.

"Yes," she said, "I *think* I can. I'll try ever so hard."

"That's a dear," said Miss Leona; "now kiss me."

"Oh no," cried Teenie: "much too soon. In a week—perhaps."

The boat went back laden with grapes, bananas, and pine-apples.

The men had leave, and came on board sober, all save one or two, who were obstreperous. Captain Antonio put them in irons, to show he was not to be trifled with, and to encourage the others.

On the morning of the third day, Leona being now on board, the *Zingara* got up anchor, set sail, and put out to sea once more.

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They were bound now for the distant islands of the Pacific Ocean. You have but to look at a map of the world, reader, to note how numerous they are. Truly their name is legion. Have those beautiful isles of the sea been raised by volcanic agency, and will they in course of time be joined together to form

one mighty continent; or are they the remains of some ancient land that has been broken up, by the constant action of the ocean currents, into what we now see them?

However, there they are. Many are wild and savage in the extreme, both as to their people and the land itself, and many are inhabited by implacable cannibals.

Captain Antonio held a council with his two mates. In what direction should they steer for these islands, at which they were to engage in sponge and pearl fishing?

"I'd favour the Cape of Good Hope route," said the mate Archie; "there is less danger to the good old—no, *new* ship."

"An' I'd go by the Horn," Paddy put in. "What about the danger to a grand strong barque like ours, and sure we ain't 'long shore men, but sailors every inch."

"Well," said Antonio, "as you two differ, I suppose I have the casting vote, so round the Horn we go."

"Hurrray!" cried Paddy.

"I'm agreeable," said Archie.

So this was decided.

Ah, little did they know of the dangers and difficulties that in a few months' time they would have to encounter.

But there was no man on board this brave barque, that was likely to fear the danger he had not yet faced.

The course from Madeira lay almost south, skirting the beautiful Canary Islands and lofty Teneriffe to the west, then on to the Cape Verd Islands.

Thence, with a point or two of westerly in it, the course was still southward to the wild shores of South America.

The weather continued all that was desirable, till the time the vessel reached the region of equatorial calms, called by sailors the doldrums.

Here are great hills of seas, as smooth as glass, but all in constant motion. There is not a breath of wind. The sails may be set and ready to receive it, but it seldom comes, except in uncertain cats'-paws, that may move the good ship on a hundred yards, then die away, and leave the canvas to flap, or sheets to crack.

The motion of the ship is distressing at such times. Down below everything is tumbling about, though in a slow and uncertain manner. The chairs may take a journey from one side of the room to the other, but speedily return; and the piano, if not lashed, would do so likewise.

In these doldrums, of which a steamer is of course quite independent, a sailing ship may lie for weeks—

“ Day after day, day after day,
And neither breath nor motion,
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.”

The sea has a glazed or greasy appearance, and but

very little life is visible, except an occasional whale ploughing his solitary way through the silent and mysterious ocean; or from aloft at times you may witness a great patch of the water rippled as with rain-drops and sparkling with silver. This is caused by shoals—myriads and millions—of tiny fishes, a species of whitebait.

Or you may see the great black fin of a basking shark, high above the water, and in shape not unlike the upright hand of a sundial; and on these fins you may observe a beautiful seagull or two perching, and pitching also. Perhaps Mr. Shark likes it.

But there may be seen many sharks about and around the ship as well as these others, that if you fell into the water would disappear in all directions for a few seconds, but return in force, each one endeavouring to win the race and be the first to seize you. A man is often thus rent into ribbons by these tigers of the sea.

Great banks of rock-like towers roll up and lie on the horizon all night long. Seldom do you hear thunder muttering among these, but the play of the lightning behind them is incessant, so that in the darkest night their shape and form are easily made out. Sometimes the sea is splendidly phosphorescent. If you drop a piece of coal overboard, it seems like a lump of living, whirling fire sinking down, down into the unfathomable depths of the ocean. Even sharks themselves and other strange fishes stir up the phosphorescence, and dart about like fiery serpents.

By night flying fishes constantly flew on board, and flopped about the deck till pussy caught one, and the watch picked up the others.

Most tender and delicious tit-bits they are for breakfast, the taste and flavour being somewhat like that of a herring, only more delicate.

Wishing to get on his voyage, Captain Antonio Garcia (pronounce Gartsia, please) ordered the boats out, and the ship was thus towed pretty nearly all day long.

At long, long last the wind began to blow. The good ship crossed the equator. She was becalmed another week, then it was all plain sailing to Rio de Janeiro.

I do not intend to describe Rio. Go and see it if you can before you die. It is—as seen from the sea, at all events—one of the most romantic cities in the wide, wide world. Edinburgh itself is not more romantic.

Here Antonio landed with the boys and little Teenie, and gave them one other delightful day in the city, and among the wild hills around, from which they not only had a bird's-eye view of the city, with its marvellous land-locked harbour, but a view of the far-off blue Atlantic itself.

By the time they had reached Rio, the fisherman's wee daughter was not only a favourite fore and aft, but she had thoroughly learned how to walk the deck, in even the roughest seas. In other words, she had

gained her sea-legs. Of course Barclay and puss were her constant playmates when on deck, but this was not always; so in their absence she would bestow her affections, and impose her fun on some of the sailors, and ride at the gallop up and down, fore and aft, on their shoulders, like a little madcap, and screaming with delight.

She was very attentive, however, to the lessons given to her by her maid and governess every forenoon; but as soon as she did escape, the young lady had little more control over her.

The men had rigged her out in a very becoming sailor costume of serge, and with this she was delighted.

But she was as fearless as a young ocelot, and as nimble as an ape. Indeed, there were two beautiful monkeys on board, and they were as often in the rigging as not. They were mischievous, but affectionate. Teenie used to take the rigging too, and instead of going through the square opening called the lubber's hole, she used to get up the thin ratlins that led round the edge, thus hanging for the time being back downwards, like a fly on the ceiling.

This was daring in the extreme. But one day, to the astonishment and terror of all, Teenie was found far, far above the maintop, sitting indeed on the maintop-gallant cross-trees, and beside the biggest monkey.

A sailor was sent up to fetch her down, for the position was fraught with extreme danger.

But in no other way would this wild fisher lassie consent to go below, except on the sailor's back.

Luckily he was a strong hardy fellow, with all the daring of a steeple-jack, for, as soon as Teenie was fairly seated, the big monkey thought he might as well take advantage of this method of descent as Teenie, and so he too jumped on the good fellow's shoulder.

As Teenie laughed and cheered all the way down, and the monkey yelled, there really was a good deal of fun on deck. But at last the sailor landed his crew safe and sound on deck.

"Oh dear me," sighed Teenie, "Dosie" (the big monkey) "and I has had such fun, and, 'Tonio," she added, "Dosie is just like a father to me."

"To be sure, dearie; now will you promise me and Miss Leona that you won't go up there again? You have given us all such a fright, you know."

"Oh," said Teenie, in a kind of patronising way, "if you is all feared, then I promise. Here is my hand."

And Teenie kept her promise.

But this scene must change now to the far-off and wild islands of the Pacific Ocean.

CHAPTER III

WILD LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE

THE good ship *Zingara* has reached the South Pacific Ocean at long last, and with a favouring breeze, and every inch of canvas set that can be carried, she is bearing merrily up and away for the Polynesian islands.

What their strange adventures there may be, not even Antonio himself can tell. Yet he has been here before, more than once. Indeed, it would be difficult to say what part of the world the weird wee skipper had not visited. He had been a rover from his very youth, and many and wild were the adventures he had gone through.

The course steered was about nor'-west by west.

The weather was delightful now. True it is that terrible storms at times sweep over this lonely ocean, but at present all is quiet and serene—just the sea, the sky, and the breeze that every true sailor loves. But how lonesome! Day after day, starry night after starry night, yet never a sail in sight. All around, as far as the eye can reach, even from the main-top-mast cross-trees, nothing can be seen but that one mighty circle of dark blue water.

Not even a bird, save the frigate bird, or that great eagle of the sea—the albatross—is visible. The former bird, it is said, sleeps in the air, and may be on wing for days at a time.

But the flight of the albatross is marvellous. There is no breeze he cannot fly against. You may see him circling high in air one minute, and next he is rushing to leeward, like an arrow from a bow. So swiftly may he pass the ship, that you can scarcely make out his form and shape. He cares not for storm or tempest; he can surmount them, and, when tired of flight, then should he be thousands of miles from the place where his great nest is placed safely on some beetling crag, o'erhanging the dark deep ocean, a day or two takes him back to his own quiet home.

I can conceive of no existence so happy, so wild, so free as that of the albatross. The powers of man, with all his inventions—his steamers, his trains, his electric motors—sink into insignificance before the wondrous flight of this great eagle of the sea.

Everything on board the *Zingara* is going on, to all appearance, happily and well. Our young heroes, Barclay and Davie, are sailors now worth the name; for if a young man loves the ocean, as these lads did, and is willing to study and learn everything theoretical and manual, he soon develops the cleverness, the activity, and strength which is so conspicuous in the true British sailor.

The monkeys have been behaving themselves as well as could be expected from any member of

the simian race. They seemed to be a compound of lovingness, affection, and downright humorous mischief. The men made much of them, and cuddled them in their arms, as if they had been babies, but this did not prevent them from picking up a sailor's pipe next minute, and escaping right away into the rigging with it.

Once it was a silver-mounted meerschaum belonging to the cooper that the biggest monkey stole.

Such fun there was after that, and what daring and agility there was displayed by the Jack-o'-tars in an endeavour to catch the thief. Nearly all hands were employed, Barclay and Davie among the rest. Up the ratlins, down the stays, here, there, everywhere, poor Dosie was chased and assailed from every quarter, while down below little Teenie was screaming with delight, and Miss Leona herself was much amused.

"Oh, Miss Leona, isn't it fun," screamed Teenie, clapping her hands and dancing. "Good Jacko! Good Dosie! don't let them take you. Oh, look! look!" she continued.

They well might look, for Jacko, or Dosie, as he was as often called, and his pipe had shinned up the main-top-gallant mast, and actually seated himself on the gilded truck.

Who would volunteer to "speel" up after him? Barclay would and did. Not a tree in all England he could not have got to the top of, and not a flag-staff either.

So up he goes, and, clasping the thin mast with hands and knees, commences the dangerous ascent. It is hard work, for high up here the mast is describing the arc of a circle, and the motion makes him giddy. He is not to be denied, however. A brave British heart beats within him, and so he does what brave Captain Webb did when swimming from England to France—he just keeps “pegging away.”

But the monkey even now has the best of it. Unconscious apparently of his danger, he is carefully examining the pipe. Then he puts it in his mouth and pretends to smoke, and very old-fashioned he does look. He tires of this, and pulls out a morsel of tobacco. This he puts in his mouth, then spits and splutters.

“Faugh!” he seems to say, “how can those big white sailor apes use such stuff? I’ll drop it into the sea.”

His little arm is lowered along the mast, and the pipe is dropped. It is a good half yard from Barclay, but he dashes out his body and arm, and never on cricket field was ball more deftly caught.

One wild cheer bursts from every part of the ship, low and aloft, and is three times repeated.

“Come on my shoulder, Jacko, old man,” says Barclay.

The old man does so, and down they come, but the poor monkey looks so thoroughly penitent and lovable, that not even the cooper has the heart to scold him.

"Oh, you good, brave Dosie," cries Teenie, running aft with him in her arms.

Pussy is jealous, and, jumping up suddenly, warms both Jacko's ears for him.

There is no love lost between Muffie and the monkeys. They pull her tail, and tease her so incessantly. Only the cat can take her own part.

One bright moonlight night though, while pussy was sitting on the top of the weather-bulwark forward, waiting for a flying-fish to spring on board, the two monkeys made a sudden spring, and pussy was hurled into the sea.

There would have been no more Muffie to skylark with Teenie or amuse the men had not a sailor at once shouted—

"Man overboard!"

The man at the wheel himself pulled a knob behind him. The beacon life-buoy was lit. He pulled another, and it fell into the sea.

He kept one hand on the wheel all the while, however, to prevent the ship from falling off.

"Man the life-boat!"

She was manned, lowered, and away in less than two minutes.

The captain was the first to rush on deck.

"Who is missing, and how did it happen?" he asked hurriedly at the man who had seen the whole affair.

"The monkeys sprang on her, sir, and walloped her into the briny."

"It is a woman, then. Good Heavens! not 'Teenie, surely, nor Miss Leona?"

"No, sir, no. 'Twas honly the cat, sir."

Antonio laughed now.

"But you were perfectly right, James," he said, "and I hope they'll save her."

They did. They found Muffie clinging to the little mast that supported the beacon-light. She had had a narrow shave, for the sea appeared alive with sharks. I believe they all wanted to know how a cat would taste.

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Rounding the Horn had been for the officers and crew of the *Zingara* a weary and dangerous experience. It was in July, and this is the deadest, darkest month of winter in these regions. The days were short; the cold was bitter and piercing. Sometimes a snowstorm was raging on the deck itself, and the drift blowing as suffocatingly fierce as ever it does on a Highland mountain. The deck, too, was slippery with ice, and the bows so clogged with it that men had to be lowered with iron jumpers to dig it off.

Then contrary winds delayed them too, and once a gale of such fierceness raged, that although they lay to with very little canvas indeed, they were drifted far south, till they came in touch with the Antarctic ice.

Here was danger indeed—danger throughout all the short and gloomy days, and still greater danger throughout the black and starless nights.

The men became dull and dispirited; only the captain and officers kept up their hearts.

The monkeys slept all day in the men's bunks, and pussy before the galley fire. Johnnie Smart held back his head and smiled as usual, only, instead of his cheeks being red, they were now both blue and red, like badly pickled cabbage.

Our boys were as brisk as ever. It really needed the whole watch to pull the frozen sheets or ropes through the blocks; but Barclay and Davie Drake always bore a hand in this work, and the men respected them all the better for it.

It was terrible labour now to reef topsails, so hard were they frozen.

One poor fellow who was lying well out to the end of the yard, with bleeding hands and cold, got so benumbed that he fell off the yard into the black, black water.

All haste was made to lower a boat, but before this could be done, he threw up both arms, uttered a piercing scream, and suddenly disappeared.

The blood-red patch and bubbles told too plainly that he had been dragged down by some monster shark. For here, as in the far-off Arctic Ocean, they grow to an immense size.

The death of Tom Ritchie, who was a general favourite, cast an additional gloom on every one, fore and aft.

During their sojourn in these bleak seas, Miss Leona confessed herself crumpled up; but our Teenie, warmly clad, was every day on deck.

She clapped her hands with joy when they passed an iceberg, but shuddered somewhat if an enormous black seal, or a goggle-eyed sea-elephant lifted his head and stared wonderingly at the vessel as she passed.

But all this was past now. The ship was in a far more genial climate, and the men had once again recovered their health and spirits.

As I have said before, there is nothing certain at all except the unexpected, and one night an event occurred of so startling a nature that it caused general terror throughout the ship.

CHAPTER IV

STRANGE STORY OF A STOLEN DIAMOND

HAVING perfect faith in the wisdom and seamanship of Archie Webber his first mate, Antonio had left him in London to pick and choose the crew, merely premising that the hands engaged should be good men and true, hardy, healthy, and capable of going anywhere and doing anything.

“So long,” said the little skipper, “as they have these good qualities, I care little what nationality they belong to.”

A crew of about forty is of course far too many for even a large barque, but Antonio needed workmen as well as sailors.

So, the crew was a very mixed one. There were English, Scotch, and Irish, Frenchmen and Finns.

These last are hardy, bold seamen, but not always to be trusted. The Dane also who used to help to man the sloop in Fisherton Bay had been kept on. Now many of those men, although excellent sailors, had been reduced by drink to mere dock loafers. They took care to be sober and smartly dressed, however, when they presented themselves before first mate Webber, and asked for a billet.

Webber questioned them, it is true; and if they stood the cross-examination, they were permitted to sign articles and join the ship.

One day an East Indian presented himself. He was tall, lithe, and smart, though there was a look in his eye that Webber hardly liked. He had been, he said, much at sea, as Lascar and even mate of an Englishman. Cross-questioned, and put to the test on board, he turned out to be really a master hand; so, despite his furtive looks, and a kind of tiger gleam that seldom or never left his dark eyes, the mate engaged him.

He thanked him profoundly, seized his hand, bent down, and pressed it to his brow.

The mate said, "Humbug!" pretty smartly, and Dungloo, as he called himself, retired, smiling, with gratitude—apparently.

This man was rather a picturesque figure on board the *Zingara*, for he was permitted to wear his native Indian dress and turban, for which latter a skull-cap was substituted when he was on duty.

He worked like a hero when on deck, but in the stormy weather off the Cape, and among the ice, he collapsed.

But now the warm weather brought him forth once more, as it brings the red admiral butterfly that has slumbered in some cosy cranny all the weary winter through.

Dungloo was once more his hardy, strong, athletic self.

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Now in this lonesome ocean, so far away from the route of trading ships, there was little to be feared during the night; the man at the wheel had just to keep his course, and keep the sails from shivering; so during the midnight watch the officer would often go forward, and yarn and smoke with the men around the bows.

One night in the dark week, that is, when the moon is in her last quarter, Paddy M'Koy's watch relieved the mate's at midnight, and the others were soon sound asleep in bunk or hammock.

About two bells, there being nothing to do, Paddy went forward and joined the men. He was a right merry fellow, this Paddy M'Koy, and he soon had them all laughing and listening to his yarns, which were now and then interlarded with snatches of rollicking Irish songs.

It was as good as a play, every one allowed, to hear the second mate spin a yarn.

A little past two bells, no one noticed a stalwart figure, muffled up in a dark cloak, come up through the half-deck companion and descend to the saloon.

The night was close and warm, and Antonio had been strangely restless.

The candle burned in jimbles at his head, and he had been reading.

But at last he had dropped off.

He always slept with a loaded revolver, not under his pillow, but by his side. A sturdy, short little weapon it was, but capable of carrying a bullet

through a three-inch board, and doing mischief afterwards.

The captain's dreams were uneasy.

He awoke with a start at last, for a hand had touched his shoulder.

To his horror, he saw the form of the tiger-eyed Dungloo standing by his bedside, with a glittering dagger in his hand, the hand quivering, as if with eagerness to plunge the fearful weapon into the captain's throat or heart.

It was a terrible moment, but Antonio Garcia never moved, nor once lost his presence of mind.

"Dungloo!" he said, "you here!"

"Dungloo is here."

Both men talked in the Hindustani language.

"Antonio Garcia, attempt but to move, attempt but to shout, and the next breath you breathe will be your last."

"But what does it mean, Dungloo? Mutiny or murder?"

"It means both, if it be pleasing in your sight."

"Dungloo, you are a fool or a madman. What is it you require, and why would you slay me?"

"The captain is brave, he quails not. Dungloo will tell the captain what he requires. If he is obeyed, his life will be spared, on one condition, that he keeps this interview a secret.

"See," he continued, "if I *have* to murder you, I can cause it to appear but suicide. Ha! Ha! None saw me come here; none will see me go. You will

be found dead in bed to-morrow with your own blood-smeared knife in your clay-cold hand."

"Horrible!"

"True; but I must do my duty to the priests of my temple. I am a Thug."

"A hired assassin!"

"Put it that way if so minded. I am a Thug, and my duty is to obtain the talismanic diamond you stole from the eye of the god."

"You lie, Dungloo; it was not I who took the prize; nor was it theft, but loot."

"But your brother stole it, and smashed the idol, and it came into your possession. Your brother is in that same temple-dungeon now. His companions are the rats, the gecko-lizards, slimy toads, and centipedes. Ha! ha! You tremble. But time presses. Quick, the diamond, or you are a dead man."

"I have known for years," said Antonio, as if to gain time, "where my dear, dear brother lies. Please God he shall yet be free."

The tiger-gleam in the man's eye was fierce now. The hand that held the twisted dagger quivered rather than shook; his white, clenched teeth gleamed like alabaster.

"Death or the diamond?" he cried once more. "Death or the diamond—I care not which?"

From under the sheet that covered Antonio came the crack of a revolver.

Dungloo tossed up his arms with a gasping scream, and fell in a heap on the floor.



THE THUG AND ANTONIO.—Page 136.

The trampling sound of footsteps was heard on deck a minute after, and down below rushed the second mate, and the first mate was awakened and joined him.

"Mates," said Antonio, "I have shot that fellow Dungloo. He attempted to murder me with the dagger that lies by his side. He is a Thug, and was specially commissioned by priests in India to murder me, or get possession of a talismanic diamond that my brother took as booty while the town of L—— was being looted by our soldiers, after a victory during the terrible Indian Mutiny."

"Get men to take him forward. Is he dead?"

"He is dead enough, bedad! and sarve him roight," said Paddy. "Oh, sir, but it is you that has had the nasty shave!"

The body of the dead Thug was taken forward to the fo'cs'le head, and a tarpaulin thrown over it.

When the sun was glimmering red across the sea, tingeing the waves a deep blood-red, the body of the Thug was laid on a grating; and just as Paddy M'Koy said the words, "May the Good Father have mercy on his soul," the grating was tilted, and with a sullen plash the body sank beneath the waves.

And so ended this sad tragedy!

Strangely enough, although bunked in the cabin or state-room adjoining the captain's, both Miss Leona and little Teenie slept soundly all the night, and heard nothing.

There was a feeling of relief in every heart apparently, now that the murdering Thug was no more. The mate Archie Webber had always suspected and feared the man, and never could forgive himself for having taken him on board.

Antonio, too, seemed happier than ever; but the strangest thing remains to be told. Although he did not appear at breakfast, having had a cup of tea brought him by the fat boy, Johnnie Smart, the captain was well to the fore at the one o'clock dinner. But now, instead of wearing that weird uncanny eye in his head that used to jerk about and cut such strange cantrips, he wore a glass eye of the usual dimensions, one you could not have known from the other, nor pronounced glass at all. It was of exactly the same colour as its fellow, and followed its every movement.

Daft little Teenie was the first to note the marvelous change for the better. To think was to act with Teenie.

She sprung on his knee, and threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, Captain 'Tonio," she cried, "your eye has growed small, and good, and pretty, just like the other. Did God make it better?"

"Yes, dearie."

"Well, you is quite bootiful now!"

"You *are*," said Miss Leona.

"Yes, you *are* quite bootiful, Captain 'Tonio."

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The story of Antonio Garcia's glass eye may be told in a few words. He communicated it himself to Barclay and Davie next evening, while all alone in the saloon, and in the following words:—

“During the awful massacres that took place in India after the Mutiny had fairly broken out, I and my brother were merchants in L——. We talked like natives and dressed as such, we even pretended to adopt the religion of the country. This saved us; but the scenes we witnessed in that doomed country will haunt me till my dying day.

“After the relief arrived, there was a considerable deal of looting done by our soldiers, and also by European civilians who had escaped slaughter. My dear brother, who is younger than I, did smash the idol in the temple, and extract its eye, a splendid diamond of the first water.

“I had several glass eyes. One that I have worn for years, was a bungled job. It had been made by a native. But in this I concealed the talismanic diamond.

“My brother's house and mine were attacked soon after, ransacked, and finally burned; and after being searched in vain, I was turned adrift, half naked, to begin the world again. I was very young then, but determined never to part with that diamond, which, strange to say, is worth several thousand pounds.

“I thought my brother dead, but for years I have known where he is imprisoned; and doubtless, boys,

if we live to get home again, I will find out a plan to restore him to myself and his friends in England and in Spain. Money can do much."

"And what did you do next?" said Barclay.

"I went to sea, dearie, and my life has been one long string of wild adventures ever since.

"But I managed to make money enough, without selling the diamond, to fit out this expedition; and before I return I shall have made a fortune, for I know where the pearls lie in thousands.

"I know the natives and their customs, and manners too, right well, and though many islands are inhabited by cannibals, they are willing to work for coloured cotton and for beads; and so, dearies, you will see what you shall see."

"And that awful Thug, sir, was he really a detective sent by the priests to murder you?"

"He was, boy. But—my day hadn't come.

"And, look, here is the diamond." So splendid a gem the boys had never seen before. They were amazed at its brilliancy, even in the sunlit saloon.

But Antonio took them into the dark storeroom, and here its lustre and gleam were increased ten-fold.

"You see, boys," he said, "I'm a little bit superstitious myself, and I believe that what brought luck to those priests has brought luck to me. And so I mean to keep it for a time."

He further informed the boys that they were not

on any account to divulge what they had been told.

They promised, and faithfully kept their word. Now something curious occurred.

Dungloo's box was a very small one, and he kept his clothes in a bag. The latter were thrown overboard as a dainty morsel for the sharks, but the little box was sent aft to the captain's cabin.

No key being found, he broke it open with a chisel.

Here were many strange amulets, little idol stones, &c., a copy of a portion of the Koran, and a log-book, giving an account of how he—the Thug—had shadowed Antonio for more than a year, without having a single chance of attacking him, but stating that he would sail with him in the *Zingara* to southern seas, and would, doubtless, obtain possession of the talisman, and bring it or send it.

But Antonio had occasion to open his eyes with astonishment when he found an exact *facsimile* of the brilliant in a tiny box, and with it a letter. This letter was in Hindustani, and brief. "I have slain Antonio," it ran, "and rescued the diamond; but I have been stabbed and put on shore on the American coast to die. I am going fast. See to my wife and little ones. A faithful black will post the case and diamond. Adieu! for ever."

But this so-called diamond was paste.

There were other idols in the temple that had been hidden, and so escaped during the general loot-

ing. These had eyes of precisely the same kind and cutting as the one in Antonio's possession. So the Thug had one copied in paste.

It was evident enough then that this brutal Thug was not only a professional murderer, but a rogue and vagabond as well. He had meant to keep the real diamond, and send to the ignorant priests that composed of paste.

And this was precisely what Antonio did on the very first opportunity. He enclosed, not only the spurious diamond, but the Thug's letter as well.

Thus ends for a time the story of Antonio's diamond. He need now no longer fear the vengeance of the priests, or their hired assassins, the bloodthirsty Thugs.

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If there was any one more happy than another on board the good ship *Zingara*, I think it was Teenie herself.

The glorious weather and the sunshine acted like a special stimulant on her. She was here, there, and everywhere on deck and below, with her monkeys or pet cat.

She had grown browner, but this only added to her innocent and childish beauty.

A curious effect of this latter was felt by—why, whom do you think? — the fat boy, Johnnie Smart.

Johnnie had fallen head over heels in love with pretty Teenie.

Whenever she came towards him, he held back his head, and laughed with joy, while his little funny eyes disappeared entirely, for Johnnie was getting fatter and fatter every week. Sometimes, while bringing things aft on a tray, if Teenie popped suddenly up, he was sure to drop a plate or two.

He brought Teenie raisins, lumps of sugar, a skipping-rope which he had made himself, and a picture-book his grandmother had given him before he started from home.

Once he went so far as to say—

“I likes you, Teenie, I does, more’n honey. You is so nice-like, and you is just pretty enough to be framed and hung above the mantelpiece. Yes, you is a swatcher, Teenie. If ye up and told me to throw stones at my grandmother, blow me tight if I would not ’ave a shy at the old lady.”

Teenie was silent. Flattery was not altogether displeasing to the saucy little maiden.

Encouraged by her silence, the boy continued:—

“Which, Teenie, some fine mornin’ I’ll find myse’f a sea-captain on a big ship, and then I’ll ax ye to be my old ’oman, and we’ll sail the blue seas over and over, and you’ll never want lollipops and sweets.”

“Which, Teenie——”

The look of disdain, and the merry laugh of Teenie as she went running after pussy, put a speedy end to Johnnie’s wooing.

And it was never resumed.

That day Johnnie went below with a finger in his mouth, and looking very done indeed.

“Girls is curious critters,” he said to himself. “Ah! I don’t think there’s much to beat an old mother arter all.”

CHAPTER V

ASHORE ON A CANNIBAL ISLAND

ONE day, what seemed a beautiful green cloud appeared in the north-west. It seemed to hang 'twixt sea and horizon.

Teenie was convinced it was fairy-land. It was no cloud, however. A peep through the captain's long glass brought into view not only the tall coconut trees with their waving tops, but the trees and bushes beneath, and the coral sands, on which numerous black and semi-nude figures were running about, and even pointing to the ship.

"This island I knew well," said Antonio, "many years ago. But there seems to be more people on it now."

"Indeed, sir!" said Mr. Webber.

The captain handed him the glass.

"And they are armed too," said Archie Webber, "with guns and clubs. Will it not be dangerous to land?"

"My dear Mr. Mate, land we must, and will subdue them by — well, by kindness or the reverse. The clubs are ugly weapons if they get to close quarters. As to the guns, they come, I think, from Birmingham; and if they aim at us we are perfectly safe. If

they shoot at random, well, one or two of us might bite the sand accidentally.

"Then," he added, "they would have a feast."

"What, sir, you don't mean to say they are cannibals?"

"They are nothing less or more.

"But," he continued, "there is a lagoon in yonder isle of St. Peter¹ in which shells lie more thickly strewn than leaves on a garden path in autumn. This beautiful isle has probably never been visited by white men, except perhaps the Queensland pirates, who carry the natives off by force, and make 'free slaves' of them."

"Pirates?"

"I call them so. Oh, Mr. Webber, did you only know one-half the cruelties perpetrated by these nefarious murdering traders, you'd long for the grave to close over you and shut you out from a blood-stained world."

The island seemed to come nearer and still more near, and its beauties were soon revealed as one glorious whole, one magnificent Elysium.

Just at that moment a little hand was laid on Antonio's arm.

There stood Teenie, looking up with pleading smile into his face.

"Well, dearie?"

"Oh, please, Captain 'Tonio, *can* I go into the fore-top to look at fairy-land?"

¹ This is not the real name.

"Yes, dearie, but no farther."

Next moment she and the big monkey, Dosie, were swarming up the rigging, and it would have been difficult to say which went the quicker.

She had a belt around her shoulder, and suspended thereto Miss Leona's lorgnettes.

She turned them on the lovely green island, and every minute a look of joy and delight o'erspread her pretty face, which flushed with pleasure.

"O my! Jacko," she cried, putting one arm over the monkey's shoulder. "I *is* glad I runned away. We's got to fairy-land at last!"

Then she put the lorgnettes to his eyes, and the creature, with a wisdom that was almost human, pretended to look through, if he did not do so in reality.

"Ach! Ach! Ach!" he cried.

"Yes," said Teenie, "it is really a fairy-land, only—heigho! all the fairies is black, and they has nasty guns."

Teenie was infinitely more happy now than she had been for weeks. She was a thorough wanderer at heart, and had she known Tennyson's poems, she might have quoted him thus:—

"How delightful

To burst all links of habit—then to wander far away
On from island unto island, at the gateways of the day.
Larger constellations burning; mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade, and palms of cluster, knots of Paradise.

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Droops the heavy blossomed bower, hangs the heavy fruited
trees;

Summer isles of Eden, lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

Truly this fairy-land of Teenie's was beautiful beyond compare—hills green-wooded to the top, rolling woods and feathery palms, a blue or opal sea, breaking in long snowy wavelets, or on the silvery coral sand; a land of languor, a land in which a poet might laze in the bright sunshine, and dream his happy life away.

But—ah! the “but” is to come.

Nearer and nearer to this strange isle of beauty crept the *Zingara*; but finally, with two men in the chains to take soundings, and a hand in the foretop to look out for shoal water, she bore more to the west, as if to leave the island.

Antonio had no such intention. Having gone some miles, he went round one, and returning, struck the island on the north side, where there was, and is of course, a lovely land-locked bay; and here the anchor was let go, and the bonnie barque swung to the tide.

From this bay, strange to say, there was a kind of natural canal leading from the sea right into the centre of the island, when it spread out into a deep and splendid lagoon, almost circular, fringed with coconut trees, banana trees, and glorious palms. Not far from the other end of the lagoon was the house of the chief himself. If he was still alive, and had not abdicated, then Antonio was sure of a hearty welcome, for the two had been very friendly in days gone by.

Antonio had gone below, and was partaking of some

luncheon in the company of little Teenie and Barclay Stuart. As usual, the former was plying him with questions, as to the fun they would have with the black fairies on this fairy island.

Presently Archie, the first mate, entered, to make a startling report.

"There is a great din on shore, sir," he said, in a low voice; "boats are collecting in scores, and I fear, sir, that they are about to attempt boarding us."

"I don't think they will try that, mate," said Antonio; "but anyhow, get up the boarding netting, call all hands, and serve out arms, and get ready the war-rocket apparatus. If they want to fight, we shall of course oblige them, but I would far rather land in peace."

"All right, sir."

And Archie Webber went quickly away to obey orders.

In half-an-hour all was ready for peace or for war.

And none too soon. The sea 'twixt the coral sands and the ship was now covered with light canoes filled with armed savages.

In truth they looked a bloodthirsty and terrible lot. As they swept nearer and nearer to the vessel, they divided their flotilla into two, with the evident intention of attacking both on the port side and the starboard.

Miss Leona had received strict injunction to remain below with Teenie.

And now Antonio quietly walked up to the bridge, and with his field-glasses quizzed the advancing boats.

To his great joy and relief, one of the very first boats, a larger and more pretentious one than any of the others, contained an old friend.

“Lolo! Lolo! don’t you know me?” shouted the captain from the bridge.

Lolo was a great chief, the king’s prime-minister in a way of speaking, and he had visited and dwelt in Valparaiso, so could talk fairly good English.

“Ha!” he cried, “me is delightee so vely much, me could weep the tears of joy. We come to takee yer ship; now we not shall do. We not eatee nobody now. Ha, ha!”

Down Lolo threw his long strong shield, his spear and awful club.

Then he stood up, and gathered the other canoes around him.

He spoke in a strange and musical language to the savages.

And every head was bowed.

No sooner had he finished, than all appearance of hostility was at an end.

A rope ladder was thrown down the side, and in a minute more Lolo and the captain were shaking hands on the quarter-deck, for the days of auld lang syne.

Antonio bade the mate and our boy heroes get up coloured cotton and beads, and distribute a yard or

two of the former, and a handful of the latter, to every canoe.

Thus was a bloodless victory ensured, and a welcome more hearty than even Antonio himself could have expected.

Meanwhile he and Lolo held a long confab on deck, where they drank sherbet together, and smoked cigars of peace.

Yes, the king was alive, Lolo told the captain, and how delighted he would be to see him.

Antonio handed Lolo a watch.

"For you," he said.

Lolo's eyes sparkled with delight.

"For *me!*" he repeated; "poor Lolo all unworthy is!"

"And the king?" he added.

"I have much fine present for him, Lolo."

"And here, dear old Lolo, we shall stop a year, to load up with sponges, pearl-shell, and pearls."

"Oh, these the king has in abundance, and will sell. And our boys they shall fishee for you, and dive; bling up the plenty much good shell."

Then he emitted a startling whoop that would have raised envy in the breast of a Mexican cow-boy.

"I shout," he explained, "'cause I is too happy to live. By-me-bye, the black men of Vra-fou come here, makee war on us. You help to killee all, all. Then too much plenty good feast."

The boats and skiffs were soon all dispersed, and the savage warriors went back in peace to their

own little grass huts in the clumps of cocoa-nut trees.

Then, when everything was arranged on board the *Zingara*, a boat was called away, and leaving Archie Webber, the mate, in charge, down the ladder tripped Captain Antonio, Barclay, and Davie Drake.

They had just got seated, and were about to shove off, when on the companion-ladder was heard the pattering of little feet, and next moment in jumped Teenie herself, and seated herself beside Barclay.

"Oh, dearie," cried Antonio, "I fear I cannot let you come. I fear——"

"I doesn't fear," cried the little sailor maiden, "and I'se going, so *that's* settled. Sailor men, s'ove off."

They laughed and obeyed.

Lolo was to be their guide and safeguard. He was evidently *facile princeps* in this beautiful isle of the sea.

Perhaps there was a good deal of the martinet or tyrant as well as savage about Lolo. He was a finely formed man; tall, brown-skinned, and rather handsome. Probably he belonged to some other and distant island, for he possessed not the large mouth and thick lips that, as a rule, distinguish the natives of Polynesia.

But every muscle in his body stuck out like knots and cords, and seemed as hard as the mainstay of a full-rigged ship.

Pride is a characteristic of nearly all savages, more particularly if they are chiefs. Lolo was no exception.

While passing through the beautiful canal-like opening that led into the broad blue lagoon, Lolo regaled his listeners with stories of his own deeds of valour and prowess.

Barclay and Davie, though they pretended to be listening, were more taken up with the beauties of nature. The narrow inlet was—

“O'erhung with wild woods thickening green.”

In every branch or leaf of feathery palm, in every frond of great tree fern that bent down to kiss the water, there was one bird or more. Kingfishers of the most gorgeous hues flitted silently here and there, or, like chips of rainbow, they suddenly darted from their perches, and dived into the water, to be seen no more.

“I say,” said Barclay to Davie, “couldn't we do some glorious bird's-nesting here?”

Davie Drake's eyes sparkled at the very thought of it.

“And some nice fishing,” added Teenie.

“Yes,” Lolo was saying; “suppose one man 'ffend me, I cut he head off, plenty too much quick.”

“Too quick to be pleasant, *I* should think,” said Davie Drake; “for the man I mean.”

“Oh, how nice!” cried Teenie, “and does all, all the blood come out, Mr. Lolo?”

“Yes, Missie, yes, and the body he tumble down. All same, I put head on pole, and stickee he 'longside my hut.”

"And are the men in this island still cannibals?" asked Barclay.

"They cookee, and eatee foh true, the men they kill in de fight, what you call enemy. No eat island man."

"Would they eat me?" said Teenie innocently.

Lolo put his hand on the child's arm as if to judge of her condition.

Barclay longed to throttle him.

"I not like discourage you," he said. "No, I not do that thing; in two tree year, plaps, you be fit. Great warrior not care eat much baby. Makee he heart soft."

Teenie was satisfied.

Lolo now broke off into a dissertation on the merits and delights of man's flesh as food. He had a wonderful flow of language, for the subject was altogether to his taste.

It would be too horrible to read or write all he said, but I must tell you that his was a savage eloquence worthy of a better cause, and that made the blood of even the rough sailors in the boat run cold as they listened to him.

If you have not yet read Elia's (Lamb's) eulogy on a roast sucking pig, do so by all means. Elia was eloquent, but Lolo on his subject could have given him twenty points out of the hundred, and beaten him easily.

Even Antonio was at last obliged to change the subject. It became too gruesome.

But by this time they were nearly across the lagoon, and soon they landed.

The king's hut, or shall we say palace, was built on a small hill, and stood inside a compound composed of cocoa-nut matting.

The way to it led up through a beautiful avenue of flowery trees, the perfume from which hung heavy on the air all around.

And this avenue, which was of smooth green grass, was lined with the king's armed and savage soldiery on both sides, and all the way up.

Our heroes had never seen so terrible a display, such cruel-looking broadswords and strangely shaped axe-like clubs. Higher up and nearer to the gates these soldiers were women of bloodthirsty and fearful aspect. It must be confessed that both Barclay and Davie were far from easy in their minds, and would have given a good deal to be back in their ship.

Antonio was quite unconcerned; and nodded and bowed to many of the under-chiefs, whom he had know in days gone by.

But Teenie was delighted at all she saw. She looked up into the warriors' faces, and even patted them as she passed along, till, grim as they were, they were fain to smile.

She came to one warrior, an old friend of Antonio's, who was more wildly dressed than any of the others, and wore strings of gay beads, and armlets, necklets, and bangles of beautiful coral around waist and limbs.

Right through the septum of his nose, extending across both cheeks, was a small dagger.

Teenie confronted him, examined his bangles, his shield, and fingers. Then she looked up in his face, and innocently remarked—

“Is you a big chief?”

He nodded and laughed.

“Oh, and you *is* handsome too. I should like to be dressed just like you, and fight plenty everywhere.”

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The king himself was a perfect Saul as to height and strength; handsome in face rather than otherwise, and almost white.

He met the little party in the tent, all smiles and strange ejaculations.

He took Antonio's hand, bent down, and spat in it, a compliment common in these islands.

Barclay hoped he wouldn't spit in his. But the daring wee Teenie took the king to book at once.

“Oh, you nasty big king,” she cried, “what for you spit in po' 'Tonio's hand.”

The king heard not, but led the captain away into the darkness of the great tent, and seated him on a couch or daïs covered with mats of grass cloth, and with pillows stuffed with a species of soft grass.

The rest followed, and seated themselves as best they could.

Then slaves entered with trays of delightful fruit,

and trays with red glasses, and bottles containing Indian sherbet.

Teenie began to think the king a very nice man now, and so she told him, merely adding that he must not be naughty again, else he would be sent to school to learn manners.

The king was better dressed than any of his chiefs or followers. He wore a costume that was almost Arab-like—the long white under-garment, and the belt in which pistols were stuck; the cloak of camel's hair, only on state occasions, and the gilded turban.

"May I ask you, King," said Barclay, "how you procured that beautiful costume?"

"Oh," he said, "I come back from far counteree. Much fine dings dere. But, my good friend Glass-eye here, he buy me one two clothes all same as dis."

The king also wore a naked sword, half as broad again as a newspaper column, and sharp on both edges.

As he sat beside Antonio, talking, he held in his left hand a massive spear as tall as a weaver's beam.

I must confess, however, that I never have seen a weaver's beam, but it must, by all accounts, be a big bit of wood.

The irrepressible Teenie came softly up and stood by the king's knee. He smiled, and gently patted her head. Then she quietly disengaged his hand, finger after finger, from the spear, which she took immediate possession of. She made a bridle from two pieces of string, then mounted her fiery wooden

horse, and, laughing merrily, rode out and away, straight down the green avenue with it.

She met many savages.

They were savage no more, when they beheld that little madcap, with her merry laughing face and cheeks so rosy, making a horse of the king's favourite spear.

This spear was in reality his sceptre, but that didn't matter one little iota to Teenie.

Barclay Stuart, with a quaking heart, had followed his little sweetheart, as he called her, but presently lost sight of her. But she soon returned again.

"O Barclay," she cried exultantly, "what a day I *is* having!"

Well, if there really was any danger to be apprehended at the hands of these cannibal savages, Teenie's very innocence protected her therefrom.

"Oh, I *is* so tired, Mr. King," she said, as she restored the spear to his majesty.

And the good-natured monarch smiled.

"Neber hab I saw," he said, "so brave and pletty a chile befoh."

CHAPTER VI

THE KOH-I-NOOR PEARL

THE ascendancy which not only Antonio, but his two mates, to say nothing of our young heroes, had gained over the king and the savages who dwelt on this beautiful island, in two months' time, was truly remarkable.

It only goes to prove that the wildest men in the world are amenable to kindness, so long as it is sincere. But your savage is a suspicious man. If he thinks you are but playing with or fooling him, he will become your enemy. If he sees you mean well, and that you are not afraid of him, he can be to you a very sincere friend indeed.

Comparisons may be odious, but I cannot help referring to the contrast between our naval officers and those of Germany in their treatment of savage tribes who dwell on the coasts.

Britons dress in mufti, and go on shore with their hands in their pockets. Germans go in full uniform, lashed to their swords, and probably bristling with six-shooters. Our fellows never get into a row, but the Fatherland fellows are never out of hot water, because they are suspected.

But now the work of pearl fishing and sponge collecting was in full swing.

There is no island in all the Pacific so rich in pearl oysters as the little-known green dot in the blue waters, to which I have given the name of St. Peter's. If ever I myself, reader, am able to afford a yacht, it is to this island and others I know of that I shall steer, and I believe that I am long-headed enough to make it pay.

Unlike many savage islanders, King "Mlada" cared little for pearls.

He was getting up in years, he explained. His people all loved him, and he preferred to remain here till death should close his eyes. So he parted readily with the pearl treasures he had during his long reign collected. He refused to be paid in money.

"Money no good," he said. "No can eat he."

But beads and cloth—ah! that was in his way.

One pearl especially did Antonio covet.

Never had he seen such a gem before. It was pink, of immense size, perfectly round, and without a flaw.

Its value, Antonio knew, was so great, that only a European queen, an emperor, or a millionaire would have cared to buy it.

The king said it was found in a conch-shell far away in the Bahamas, a hundred years ago, and captured from the ship that ran aground on this very island. His great-grandfather was then king, he told Antonio.

“All de sailor kill,” he continued. “Agoo! dey make nicee food for de warriors, but dat pearl, he bes’ of all, and—dere she lie!”

The pearl had a piece of the pink shell itself attached to it. This was perfectly circular, and as large as a small saucer. From the centre rose the gorgeous gem, which Antonio believed he could sell for at least £20,000.

For a long time Mlada would not hear of parting with it. So Antonio said no more about the matter just then.

It came into his possession, however, in a very strange way indeed.

Miss Leona proved to be a young lady whose chief happiness consisted in doing good to others. She had plenty of time; and no sooner did she arrive on the island, than she set herself to study the manners, and customs, and language of the islanders.

Not being English, she picked up the language of the cannibals in two or three months. It was by no means a difficult one, but simple and sibilant, yet most expressive.

And now, while a corps of native divers were at work every day in the lagoon, gathering shells, Antonio and our young heroes often going down in the diving-bells, and heaping up piles of these; while scores of natives were busy also diving for, and extracting or digging out great sponges from coral caves and cavities, Leona began to ask herself the question, What can I do for these poor people?

She went among them almost daily when the weather was fine, and it is nearly always fine here. The natives looked upon this beautiful but sad-faced young lady, dressed all in white, as a kind of good spirit, and most of them were just a little afraid of her.

But she never went on shore without bringing little presents that she obtained from Antonio—tobacco, of which the men, curiously enough, were inordinately fond, smoking it in pretty little pipes carved from the dried hard wood they found on the island. Sometimes, however, these pipes were fashioned from coral.

The king, too, smoked an immense hubble-bubble, a present from Antonio in former years.

But Leona brought the women beads as well, and many little nicknacks fashioned by her own hands from coloured paper and cloth, such as watch-pockets, &c. These the cannibal ladies did not hang on the walls of their huts, but to their ears, half-filling them with little pink cowries to keep them steady.

As their ears were very large, and as they walked erect and stately, the ornaments never fell off.

But these were all wives of great chiefs, or those in high authority. Once Leona inadvertently gave a common cannibal's wife a pair of these pretty pockets. Of these the woman was instantly deprived. She only sighed, and sat down in the sands to bewail her lot.

When Miss Leona came on shore, she brought Teenie with her, dressed becomingly in pink and

white, and always Johnnie Smart, the fat boy, as a kind of bodyguard.

He really wasn't much use after all, except to carry things. He would gaze around him for a few minutes wonderingly; but being incapable of taking it all in, he contented himself with turning his fat face skywards, and chuckling pleasantly to himself, the eyes of course being out of sight.

Leona's first visit was always to the king's tent, or rather palace.

She made him a beautiful blue smoking-cap, trimmed or embroidered with silver, and showed him how to wear it. At the same time she presented him with a hand mirror.

"Ugh!" he cried, when he looked in. "I never tink befoh I was so boo'ful. Leona, you are one good spirit.

"Dat little chubbie you' daughter?"

"Oh no, I am not married."

The king started up, spear in hand, and stood before her erect—six feet and six inches of cannibal king, and broad in proportion.

This was startling, and Leona was not a little frightened. What could he possibly mean?

"Be *my* wife," he cried, in a conch-shell kind of voice. "Be my best wife."

"No, no, no; pardon me, King Mlada, but I have a dear old mother, to whom I must return. Besides," she added, "you have too many wives already. Far, far too many, sir."

But he persisted: "De vely day you become my wife, I will call de boys all round, and cut de heads off all my oder wives, 'cept Ooeya. Den my soldier shall have one glorio feast of *bukalo*" (human flesh).

Leona was so shocked that she shed tears, seeing which, Teenie tried to soothe her.

The king still stood there, looking as sheepish as a very much enlarged edition of a young school-boy.

Teenie flew at him, and smacked him twice briskly on the bare arm.

"You're a naughty *naughty* king," she cried. "Go back to your seat at once, and be good."

The king looked down and smiled. So did Johnnie Smart, in his own way.

But everything was all right from this day, and his cannibalistic majesty never mentioned marriage to Miss Leona again.

Now Ooeya was Mlada's favourite young wife, and, with the exception of a somewhat big mouth, she really was a pretty girl.

The other wives were really little more than maids to Ooeya, and, knowing her own power, she used to make them obey her slightest behest.

The happy idea occurred to Leona, of dressing Ooeya in a more suitable and pretty costume, than the rather scanty one she at present wore.

She took her on board ship with her, and brought her back in two days.

King Mlada was in ecstasies, and pressed his wife

to his breast. She was a good spirit now, he said, and "he happy, oh! so happy."

Ooeya's costume, however, was simplicity itself: a neat little crimson skull-cap, prettily braided and beribboned hair, a costume of white cotton, with a sash of crimson to match the cap, and a triple string of blue glass beads around her sable neck.

Just while the giant king was in this ecstatic state, Antonio and the boys came in.

The king seized him by both hands.

"See," he cried, "see my beautiful spirit wife!"

Then he sat gravely down on the matted floor cross-legged.

"Speak me not now," he said, and for ten minutes there was not a hush to be heard in the big, grass-built hall.

Then he slowly rose, and beckoned all to leave the hall except Antonio.

"Capitan," he said, almost solemnly, "my friend and brudder ever you hab been."

"Yes, Mlada."

"You gib me much fine ding! You fight for me one time foh true!"

"I may have to fight for you again."

"I be happy. Boys much want *bukalo* feast. I too—plaps. But boys love *bukalo*."

"Mlada, I will not be friendly with you if you eat human flesh," said Antonio.

"Ah! den I plefer you, capitan, to any *bukalo*. I lub you. I ask you maid Leona to be one wife to

me; she say she not can do. I speakee her no more. She is my sistuh, she say."

Antonio smiled, and the king went on in a more mournful voice now. "I am soon to be old. Much fight I care not for. I hab no son, no daughter, no fliend—just you. I cannot eat de big pearl."

"No, now you can't take it to the happy hunting-ground with you."

"No, no. Oh no. But, capitan, I hab ten oder wife. I would lub them more if all dress like Ooeya, but not so fine. Ooeya is de youngest and best. One spirit wife is Ooeya."

"Well," said Antonio, "as you say, the big pearl is of no use to you when dead: I will tell you what I shall do. I will get Leona to make two dresses each for your ten wives, and I will give you a rich store of bright cloth, and a thousand beads, all for the big pearl. And, wait, I will give you something else still more marvellous. Wait, Mlada."

He went to the door of the grass hall, and beckoned to a sailor, who came in and deposited something on a couch.

It was a storage battery, with long tube and bell light.

This last was fastened to the wall. Then Antonio invited the king to press a button. He did so. Instantly a flood of dazzling light illumined the whole hall.

For the next half minute the astonished king's speech consisted of vowels of acclamation.

“Oo—ah—ze—ha!” and so on, so forth.

He was able to stammer forth at last: “De white man is one great wonder. He go to the sun and steal its light for poor King Mlada’s home. Good, good man you!”

He started up as he spoke, and going to a huge iron chest, inserted a key, and brought forth the paper box which contained the splendid pearl.

“It is you’s, best fiend mine. You’s for eber and eber.”

Antonio clasped his hands, and, as he did so, he descried tears in the giant’s eyes, so for a time he did not ask him to speak.

But that light was kept up for three days and nights in the king’s hall, and then the captain re-charged it.

When the dresses were all completed, I don’t think there was a happier king in heathendom than His Majesty the Emperor Mlada, as Antonio called him.

CHAPTER VII

LEONA AND THE ISLANDERS

THREE months and over had passed and gone, and though, during at least six weeks of this time, there were violent storms of rain and thunder, that seemed to shake the island to its very foundation, still the fishing went merrily on.

The dark-skinned natives were paid with cloth, beads, and tobacco. Money they despised.

The whole bottom of that deep lagoon was bedded inches deep with pearl oysters ; and the savages worked like Trojans, seeming never to tire.

Their drink was the water found in the young cocoa-nuts. While still green, these contain about a pint and a half of pure water that tastes like iced milk. At this time the nut contains no kernel, only a little delicious transparent jelly sticking around the shell.

Our boys went constantly down in their divers' suits, and could remain comfortably below a long time, and fill their bags, while the natives could stay but little over a minute.

Our young heroes were permitted to keep all the pearls they found, and many were very valuable.

But diving was not unattended with danger, for in the lagoon were not only sharks—huge and awful monsters—but great, ungainly, horrid alligators.

Somehow they never dared attack the boys or Antonio in the diver's dress.

The savages used to dive together in parties of six to ten, and they were then unmolested by the tigers of the sea.

One day a young brave, probably to give himself éclat with the pretty, dark-skinned maidens who stood watching on the beach, took his spear and dived alone.

Two minutes slipped away. He came not to the surface, but dark red blood and bubbles soon rose up and revealed his fate—torn in pieces by sharks or alligators.

This episode was soon forgotten.

The girls grinned and laughed.

"Plenty good 'gator," one said who had learned a little English. "Plenty good 'gator.¹ I lubee he. He one good man—he lub de *bukalo* feast. Num! num! num!"

And she licked the back of her hand with a species of cannibalistic frenzy that made Barclay Stuart shudder.

Some of these interesting maidens smiled and pointed to the boys, and even nodded to them.

"They've fallen in love with you," said Antonio, smiling.

¹ Alligator.

Antonio was not half so weird-looking now that he had discharged that uncanny eye.

"In love," cried Barclay; "I would not sweetheart one of those girls for all the gold in Queensland."

"Oh," continued Antonio, "that isn't the kind of love they love you with. They want to broil and eat you, dearie."

Months went on; the sponges collected on the sea beach were tied to sticks in the sand at low water, in thousands. When the tide was high it washed them; when low, the sun bleached them; and so all the innumerable animalculæ that dwelt in their cells soon decayed and washed away.

As soon as they were thoroughly dry and clean, they were taken off to the ship in boats.

But during all these months Leona had not been idle. Her heart bled to think that these poor benighted savages should never have heard the history of the world, as mythically revealed in the Book of Books.

She determined to tell them this story, and the better and happier story that followed—the story of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

She hired natives to build a church on a hillside, with great open windows in it that looked far out over the lone blue sea. The church was entirely composed of palm leaves woven together, and supported on bamboo poles. There was squatting room for five hundred.

Leona's sermons were simplicity itself, and couched in the language of the islanders.

She told of the fall of man after the creation of the world, of the gradual peopling of the earth, of the promises of salvation held out to God's people through the mouths of His prophets, and last of all of the coming of the gentle Saviour to this weary, sinful world—of His humble birth, His boyhood, His wondrous work, and His awful death on the cross, from the time He was nailed up until His gentle spirit was wafted away with the ever-memorable words, "'Tis finished."

Her prayers were most earnest and touching, and many of her humble listeners wept aloud. Antonio himself conducted the music. The little man was clever, and had translated many of our most beautiful paraphrases into the island language; and these, wedded to lovely old tunes like *Martyrdom* or *London New*, seemed to go straight away to the hearts of these simple savages, and stir up feelings such as they had never before experienced.

The paraphrase I think which affected them more than most others, perhaps I may be allowed here to transcribe. It is founded on the seventh chapter of Revelation, from verse 13 to the end. It had been feelingly translated by Antonio, who touched the guitar, as he sung—

“How bright these glorious spirits shine !
Whence all their white array ?
How came they to the blissful seats
Of everlasting day ?

Lo ! these are they from sufferings great,
Who came to realms of light,
And in the blood of Christ have washed
Those robes which shine so bright.

.
Hunger and thirst are felt no more,
Nor suns with scorching ray ;
God is their sun, whose cheering beams
Diffuse eternal day.

The Lamb which dwells amidst the throne
Shall o'er them still preside ;
Feed them with nourishment divine,
And all their footsteps guide.

'Mong pastures green He'll lead His flock,
Where living streams appear ;
And God the Lord from every eye
Shall wipe off every tear."

CHAPTER VIII

INVASION BY SAVAGES—FEARFUL FIGHTING

FOR ten all too brief but happy months the *Zingara* had lain at anchor in the beautiful island bay. Though storms had raged at times, she was so well protected in a kind of land-locked harbour, that danger was never dreaded.

Antonio had already made what is called a good voyage—that is, a remunerative one, and the vessel was well laden with sponges, mother-of-pearl, many beautiful specimens of shells, all collected by our young heroes, together with the rarest specimens of coleoptera or beetles, of marvellous colours, with splendidly coloured butterflies, as large as ladies' fans. These latter, Antonio had determined to present to the British Museum, along with hundreds of specimens of the wild flora of the island. Many of them he had treated chemically, and so skilfully that they would retain their beautiful colours indefinitely. He had added to this collection also many rare birds, that probably had never been seen alive or dead in Britain.

Leona still continued her sermons to the people, and incalculable was the good these had already done.

Especially severe too had she been on the awful habit of devouring human flesh. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in these ten short months she had converted a cannibal island into a Christian community.

So earnest was Leona in the work which she really believed God had given her to perform.

The pearl-fishery and sponge-bleaching still continued. In order to take up as little room as possible on board, the dried sponges were packed in bales and weighted down.

But the valuable pearls, especially the pearl which was a fortune in itself, were stowed away in a small fire-proof safe in the captain's cabin.

WHAT WAS ANTONIO GARCIA'S REAL CHARACTER?

This is a question which the reader may have already asked himself. It is a question that myself and mess-mates of *H.M.S. P*—— often asked ourselves and each other, when first we made the weird little man's acquaintance in the city of Bombay.

We met him by accident, and could not help being struck with not only his erudition and scientific knowledge, but his strange weird manner, and the glamour of his mysterious glass eye. That he had a history we felt sure—a history and a past. So we, at his own invitation, went often to see him.

He lived in a bungalow in the outskirts, that is, beyond the site of the old walls. But the little man,

and his Mahratta servants also, always went armed with dagger and revolver. He laughingly explained to us that he went in daily danger and fear of his life ; for that, as far as he was concerned, he said, he cared nothing, but the happiness of others dear to him was bound up in his.

We knew too, that he was in haste to amass wealth. We found out that he was doing so on the Stock Exchange, or by speculation.

There was then a great company started, for the purpose of reclaiming some miles of the shallow sea around Bombay. Antonio was much taken with the scheme, and bought heavily of the shares at par. They mounted up to a wondrous price ; and one night, so he told us, he had a dream. Some thing, or creature, covered with slime and seaweed, crawled up out of the sea, and thrice repeated a warning to Antonio, anent the Ocean Reclamation Company.

Next day Antonio sold out, and only just in time, for a week or two after, the bubble burst. Perhaps Antonio Garcia and the promoters of the scheme were the only persons who had profited thereby.

But the questions remained. What was the meaning of the man, so to speak ? Was he a wizard or a sorcerer—his powers of hypnotism were very great—or was he *mad* ? Why his haste to amass wealth ?

Again, we could not help noticing his great influence over the lower animals. Whence this magic power that caused even the birds of the air, and smaller

beasts of the jungle, to come at his call, and even feed from his hands?

While out walking—and he used to walk a deal—I have never met him without seeing a pigeon or two, or gulls flying tack and half tack close around him.

Again, he was ever trying to do good to those around him, even to little Hindoo children. Was he sincere?

This question we had to answer by asking another: Would birds, and beasts, and children have loved him so had he not been sincere?

Something else we could not help noticing: every forenoon a tall and handsome Mahommedan, dressed outwardly in a long *green* cloak of camel's hair, used to call at Antonio's bungalow, leaving his sandals on the doorstep. (We never went in when we saw the sandals.) This reverend, patriarchal-looking old man was a real scion of the prophet, and used to teach Antonio both Hebrew and Sanscrit.

But this was another mystery. I remember that in our mess we summed Antonio up thus: He is either a sincerely pious and good man, as he appears to be, or he is working towards some mysterious end, and is in league with the Evil One.

Reader, I should be giving myself away were I to unravel the mystery now.

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Life on the island and on the sweet blue sea around it had become very delightful now.

Strange that our religion should be capable of remoulding even the heart of a savage and cannibal. But so indeed it is.

Perhaps, though, never was the Gospel preached with more earnestness, or gentle and sweet persuasiveness, than that which fell from the tongue of Leona.

There was no rant, no cant. It was all common-sense. It was heart appealing to heart, therefore it was effectual.

But now, alas! the character of my story—through no fault of mine—must change in a moment almost from that of peace to wild war.

My clansman, the good and great General Gordon, who was slain at Khartoum, used to say that war was a weapon of Jehovah Himself, and that we poor blind worms, crawling on this earth below, must not question the goodness of the Being who made us all.

Well, reader, we will know everything in good time; all we have got to remember now is, that our minds are but finite, and we see darkly and dimly. "Who by searching shall find out God?" Man never shall nor can in this world.

But not to digress: the woodland scenery of the island was enchanting, either on hill or plain. True, there were a few snakes in the woods, but our heroes never meddled with them. Sometimes a beautiful green thing, like the thong of a whip, would depend from the branch of a tree, or one would wobble out from a bunch of bananas; only they were more

frightened than our boys themselves, and always dropped down and fled.

There was also a long thin snake, called the fire-serpent, of which the natives were terribly afraid. It was of a bright crimson colour, and very lovely.

Once one shot itself half out from a tree-fern stem, and hissed in Barclay's face.

It did not strike. Had it done so, poor Barclay Stuart would have dropped out of this story.

There were very many different kinds of lizards. One was the eyed-lizard, green with yellow spots, very lovely—tame, too, to a degree. Davie Drake captured one in his handkerchief and took it off to the ship. It grew to a length of eighteen inches, and was never happier than when being made cosy, and cuddled by little Teenie.

Pussy took to it also; but the very sight of it caused the monkeys to scream with fear, and shake and tremble like leaves of the linn.¹ Well, now that there was no danger to be apprehended from the savages, Teenie always accompanied the boys on their natural history expeditions; and always came back laden with wild flowers, and never without orange blossom.

Johnnie Smart went also to carry luncheon; and much indeed this last was enjoyed, while the party were seated high up on a wooded brae perhaps, or

¹ A species of poplar whose leaves are ever trembling; said, in Scotland, to be the tree on which our Saviour was crucified. Hence the quivering.

close by the side of some purling stream, where silvery fishes used to be seen leaping up out of the pools in sheer wantonness, regardless that their enemies, the rainbow king-fishers, were darting hither and thither among the green boughs.

They seldom took luncheon on the beach, because of the alligators. These loathsome monsters not only lay basking on the coral sand, but even swam long distances out to sea.

Well, one day, or rather early one morning, our heroes and little heroine had gone to a distant part of the island after some strange curios.

All at once they sighted the beach. To their horror they found it covered with at least 500 swift canoes. Probably a thousand warriors also lined the beach. They were arrayed in all the ghastly panoply of savage warfare, and were lying at ease in all positions, but close to their guns and spears.

The presence of our young people in the wood adjoining was speedily perceived, and a dozen warriors immediately started to give chase. Only fleetness of foot could now save our boys and little Teenie. They took to the thickest part of the wood—Barclay Stuart, who was very strong for his age, carrying Teenie.

The warriors never overtook them. But, alas for poor Johnnie Smart! Fat lads are no good in active service, and Johnnie was made prisoner.

His fate would be sealed, and that night or next morning the savages would have a *bukalo* feast.

They came from a distant isle, and were a fierce, implacable tribe called the Wah-Poolas.

Our boys were soon at the king's house, where luckily they found Antonio.

Instant action must be taken; so all hands were summoned, and the king's best soldiers, in two hours' time, were ready for the war-path.

It was determined that they should attack the invaders from the woods, while Antonio's armed boats, with riflemen and war-rockets, should sweep round the point and attack them from the sea.

As for poor, unfortunate Johnnie Smart, with his innocent ways and fat laughing face, his doom would soon be sealed.

In fact these Wah-Poola cannibals would have him for supper, garnished with the fragrant leaves of a kind of bay-tree plentifully to be found in the forest.

Everything was well managed and well timed. Mlada the king, armed with his terrible spear, was to conduct the land forces, and the attack would be made simultaneously, the signal being the firing of a gun from the boats.

By twelve o'clock the forces were on the move towards the sea, and at one the awful conflict began.

But shortly after rounding a green promontory, the five well-armed boats of the *Zingara* came upon a dreadful scene.

On a rock, in-shore, blazed a fierce and brightly burning fire of wood. Advancing towards this was

at least two hundred demoniacal warriors. They were black and awful; and as they marched they chanted some wild, unearthly kind of song, varied by shrill screams, while they waved aloft their guns and spears, and bent their naked bodies to and fro, and from side to side.

Suspended between two forked sticks, and held high aloft, was a strong bamboo, fully seven feet long.

Underneath this, with pinioned hands and legs, and tied to the bamboo by cords, hung the unfortunate fat boy.

It was evident he was alive, although doubtless soon to be murdered.

This party must be attacked first, at all hazards.

The boats are now well round the point. In their blind frenzy the cannibals have not seen them, nor do they, till a terrible war-rocket goes tearing through their ranks, followed by another, and still another.

For a moment they scatter in confusion across the beach, but quickly reform *en masse*. Twenty at least of their number lie dead on the coral sands, that are dyed with their blood.

Forming in close columns was the worst formation they could have adopted.

For now the rifles of Antonio's men play awful havoc in their ranks.

The bearers of the poor, unhappy, fat boy have made for the bush with him. Presently, however, they emerge without their burden, and a company

of Mlada's men follow speedily after, with loud cries for vengeance.

Quickly, now, after firing one other volley, the sailors sweep onwards to the shore, and assist with revolver and bayonet in the dreadful tulzie.

It is indeed a wild and fearsome fight, but in the end the enemy are beaten. They are beaten, they are surrounded, and—awful to say, annihilated.

No mercy, no quarter is given, even to the wounded.

But this is, after all, but the introduction to the pitched battle that follows.

For quickly now, along the silver sands, where the blue sea is breaking and singing in long, white, curling lines, comes the main body.

From the boats, war-rockets considerably disconcert the savages, but they are not to be denied.

With wild slogan and shout, the horrid horde rushes on.

CHAPTER IX

A FLEET OF THE DEAD.

MEN had been left in the boats in charge of the war-rocket apparatus, and as the invaders dashed onwards along the beach, rocket after rocket tore through their midst.

I do not know anything more disconcerting to savage warriors, who nearly always charge in a compact body, than these terrible rockets.

Meanwhile the native defenders, acting on the advice of Captain Antonio, had betaken themselves to the bush, as if in headlong flight.

Concealed by the trees, however, they ran on, and actually passed the invaders.

Then a halt was called.

Antonio had formed his men, about thirty in number, into a rallying square, and when still at a distance of four hundred yards, they opened fire upon the savages with deadly precision.

Many a black-skin fell on the coral sands, never to move again, and very many more were wounded.

But nothing could stem their wild rush. Once, indeed, they paused for a minute or two to fire a volley.

Antonio's men, seeing their intention, threw themselves flat on the ground just as they took aim, and the bullets from those Brummagem rifles went harmlessly whistling through the air.

The savages now threw down their guns, apparently determined to end the fight with club and spear and sword.

Again their wild slogans rent the air; once more a telling volley was fired; once more two rockets tore through their ranks. Then Antonio, knowing the futility of standing up with so small a force against six hundred demons incarnate, quickly gave the order, and he and his men disappeared in the bush.

Here, protected from the spears that might be hurled against them, they could fire from behind every tree.

They had only time, however, to fire one good volley, when the chief of the invading savages seemed to give orders for his wild warriors to take the bush, even in face of Antonio's deadly, though desultory fire.

But, see, a dark cloud has suddenly appeared in the rear of the enemy. It is the king and his men, who have emerged from the bush.

Indecision marks the conduct of the invading savages now.

Another war-rocket comes roaring from the boats, another, and still another follows.

One more withering volley is fired from the bush.

Then Antonio, waving his sword aloft, shouts—

“Now, brave boys! Now is our time. Fix bayonets. At them with the steel. Charge!”

They did charge with a true British cheer, and with true British vim.

Those bayonets made terrible havoc in the enemy's ranks, so did Antonio's sword, and the revolvers of our young heroes.

Hard would it have gone, however, with Antonio's men, had not at the most critical moment—for Antonio himself had tripped and fallen, and a hulking savage was kneeling on his breast, shortening his assegai to stab him—the king's men rushed on to the combat.

The savage kneeling on Antonio, Davie Drake complacently shot.

He leapt up, and falling back against another, brought him to the ground. Before he could recover, a ball from Barclay's six-shooter relieved him of the trouble of ever getting up again.

The fighting between the king's men and the invaders now became desperate—terrible.

The sickening thuds of the death-dealing clubs, the cracking of revolvers, the shouts and screams and cries of agony, are all too difficult to describe graphically.

The foe was beaten at last, not without loss on the side of the king, while Antonio had three men slain and ten wounded, more or less severely.

Among the latter was Barclay himself, who had received a spear wound through the shoulder.

As in all savage warfare, the enemy was completely wiped out—not a man of the invading force was left alive.

Antonio was to all intents and purposes a skilled surgeon, if not physician, and he now had not only his own wounded, but those of the king, carefully conveyed to the village huts, after their wounds had been temporarily seen to.

Barclay was carefully attended by his friend Davie Drake. The boy refused to go on board for the present. The pain of his wound, however, was so intense that he seemed to writhe in agony. No one had fought more bravely than Davie; but now as he beheld the sufferings of his dearest friend, the tears rolled over his face, and he made no attempt to check them either.

But Antonio was nothing unless original in his ideas.

Fearing, then, that the king's people would be tempted to renew their cannibalism, he requested him to withdraw his men entirely, and encamp them around his own palace, leaving him, Antonio, a free hand to deal with the enemy's dead.

He despatched a boat and twenty men to bring round the ship.

This they speedily did, and there was still three hours of daylight to complete the operations he had in hand.

It was a strange idea.

He might have buried the invaders' dead in the bush ;

but cannibals will dig men out of their graves, to feast on their flesh.

He explained his intentions to the two mates.

“Capital,” said Webber, smiling.

“Bedad,” said the second mate, “it’s the foinest plan ever I heard tell of for many’s the day.”

There was a good breeze blowing from the east and south, and a strong current running north towards the very islands whence the invaders had come in their little boats. As speedily as possible these were now laden up with the dead, and fastened together by ropes. Then sail was set, and a quarter of this dead-laden flotilla was towed out, and cast off in the current. Antonio was delighted to see this awesome fleet move slowly northwards.

Back they came again and again; and just as the sun was rapidly westering, the last of the boats, with the mangled remains of the enemy, were cast adrift in the ocean currents.

They had left in health and glee, to destroy, as they thought they would, an old enemy, and capture his island, his chattels, his goods, his wives and children. But—terrible retribution—canoe after canoe would strike their islands, and bear to their very doors their sadly mangled corpses.

The dead of the king’s men were next buried.

“ They buried them darkly at dead of night,
The sods with their bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeam’s misty light,
And the lantern dimly burning.”

This is not quite correct. There were no lanterns, but a full moon, that one could have seen to read the smallest type by.

The graves were dug deeply, near the edge of the sea, during a receding tide, and there they were laid to rest for ever and for aye.

Miss Leona was there, and while around the open graves Antonio and his men stood with bared heads, she read the beautiful service of the English Church for the dead.

Nay, nay, not dead, we trust, but gone before. For Christians, though of the simplest kind, were these poor fellows—just children grown up. That was all. But Christ our risen Lord loved children, and He loves all who are innocent, even should ignorance be combined with that innocence.

And now the graves are speedily covered in. When the tide returns it will efface all tell-tale marks, and the last resting-place of those brave fellows, who died in defence of their native island, will never be known.

“Why, sir,” said Davie Drake suddenly to Captain Antonio, “I——”

“Well, dearie?”

“Do you know what we’ve done?”

“We’ve done so much that I hardly know what you refer to.”

“We have in our excitement forgotten all about poor Johnnie Smart!”

"Dear! dear!" said Antonio; and a search-party was instantly organised.

They found him at last under a banana tree, and at first they believed him dead.

He was still tied fast to the bamboo, but was only sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

They undid the cords from his cut and swollen limbs, and some of the men wrapped their jackets round him, and quickly bore him to the beach.

It was not until some time after he had been taken on board, and placed in a warm bunk, that Johnnie recovered consciousness.

He sat partially up, supported by Antonio himself. Evidently he was only half awake.

"I say, you know—why—which I—what, *you*, Captain Antonio? Ha, ha, ha.

"Why, captain, I did have the drollest dream. I thought"—then his big mouth expanded in a broad smile, his eyes as usual sunk out of sight behind his fat cheeks, he bent back his head and exploded in a hearty laugh.

Antonio held a glass to his mouth, and he drank feverishly.

"Which I'll tell you the dream to-morrow, captain," he said; and sinking back on the pillow, he was soon fast asleep once more.

He was better and almost well when he awoke next forenoon; and scarcely could he be convinced for a time that his terrible adventure of the day

before was not all a dream. But the reality came home to him at last, and he shuddered to think of the narrow escape he had had; then quickly recovering himself, laughed in the same old way, for nothing could alter Johnnie.

“Which there may be some nice pickin’s on me,” he told Davie Drake, “’cause I’m exstronar’ plump and beefy, ye know. But, lo! I don’t want to be trussed and eaten by they devils, you bet. ‘Sides,” he added solemnly, “I’ve got a mother, and a granny, and a little sister; and, lo! Mr. Drake, if they were to hear o’ my bein’ cooked like a Christmas goose, widn’t they just—

“‘Let the tears doonfa’
For Jock o’ Hazeldean.’”

.

The wounded, including Barclay, did well. They were all on board ship. Awnings were spread for them fore and aft, and under these hammocks were hung; and no doubt it was the delightful and ozonic breath of the blue sea that helped to restore them and heal their wounds.

Antonio was the surgeon, but Leona was dresser and nurse; and poor little Teenie was busy enough also as a helper.

But every minute she could spare she spent by the couch-side of Barclay Stuart. His wound was more severe than had at first been dreamt of, for the spear appeared to have been poisoned.

Convalescence came at last, however—dreamy, sleepy, but happy convalescence.

Teenie, while nursing Barclay, seemed to be a changed being—child no longer, but an earnest, sympathising, loving wee woman. He wanted for nothing. Sometimes he would stretch out a hand to her, and she would hold it, and nurse it till he dropped gently off to sleep. She even had a muslin veil to throw over his cot and face, to guard him from the venomous mosquitoes.

When awake, Teenie would sit by his cot and read to him just the stories that she herself delighted in—sea tales such as “Tom Cringle’s Log,” and others from the writings of Russell, and Captain Marryat. For a whole month she never left the ship; but she waxed neither white nor ill. The monkeys were her constant companions. As for poor pussy, she never left her master’s cot, except to take food and a little run on deck.

Teenie was filled with joy when Barclay Stuart was at last able to get up and take exercise on the quarter-deck. He leant on the arm of his friend—his brother, I might almost say—Davie Drake. Teenie took his other arm; and pussy, looking very demure, brought up the rear.

In six weeks’ time all was well; every wounded man had recovered afloat and ashore, and everything was quiet in this lovely island paradise.

One month more and the *Zingara* would set sail once again, and steer westward through the Pacific

isles, visiting many of them, round the Cape of Good Hope, and so northward along the west coast of Africa, back to Merrie England—that was their intention.

I must here repeat, however, that there is nothing certain at sea—except the unexpected.

CHAPTER X

AFLOAT ON SUMMER SEAS

WHEN Leona, in her quiet and earnest way, undertook—very many months ago—the terrible task of converting this cannibal island to Christianity, she often trembled to think that when she was no longer among the poor creatures, they might revert to their old savage customs and manners.

She prayed for strength and for hope.

Both came. Early one morning, even before she had left her cot, a suggestion appeared to come floating across her mind, and she determined to act upon it at once.

There were several reverend old men among the islanders, who had always been looked up to by their juniors and inferiors. They had been seers, in a manner of speaking—seers and fetishmen. But they had, under the ministry of Leona, abandoned all pretensions of being seers, and cast the fetish behind them.

These men were voluble speakers. Why not teach them specially, and train them to preach? She carried out the idea, and elected Wooma, the most earnest and eloquent of them, to be pastor of the island; the others

would also preach occasionally, but in other respects they would be elders of the Palm-Leaf Church.

The plan succeeded beyond her utmost expectations.

Antonio made Wooma a present of a little harmonium that he had on board, and taught an elder to lead the music, while a choir of black boys and girls took up the singing.

Leona now felt assured that the good seed sown, and which had taken root so speedily and so firmly, would spring up and flourish like a green bay-tree. He who rules on earth and in heaven, she told herself, would not permit that tree to wither and perish.

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In another month's time the *Zingara* was being got ready for sea once again.

Her cargo was not a heavy one, but it was very valuable; and as they passed through that mist of islands which dot the Pacific Ocean almost from the western coast of South America to the far Philippine Isles and the rugged shores of Borneo, they would have ample opportunity of adding to their cargo.

Farewell! Ah, what sadness breathes in that one wee word. It is one that in print should be put in the faintest type; and when spoken it should be but breathed or whispered.

Says the Anglo-Scottish poet Byron—

“Farewell !

For in that word—that fatal word—howe'er
We promise—hope—believe—there breathes despair.”

.

Not so, poet of my earliest years! For if we meet no more here below, may we not hope to meet again in another and better world than this? Then why "despair"?

Leona's parting with her congregation, and her last sermon, were quite affecting. Strange how the religion of Christ can soften the heart of even the savage.

There was not a dry eye in all that little church, as they crowded round her to touch her hand before she departed. Hardly, indeed, could they prevail upon themselves to let her depart.

Just before Leona's boat rounded a wooded cape in the lagoon, and would be seen no more by those she was leaving, she looked back. They were still all there—disconsolate, dreary.

She stood up in the boat, and waved her handkerchief.

It was a wet one.

Hitherto she had borne up well; but now, womanlike, she sank down in the stern-sheets of the boat, and burst into tears.

Teenie got on to her lap, and with her arms around Leona's neck did all a child could do to comfort and cheer her.

But the ship's anchor was now up, her sails filled, and she was soon far away at sea, with the island looking once more like a green cloud afloat in the sky. Then Leona's heart grew calmer.

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Captain Antonio had taken away with him four sturdy natives, simply because they had expressed a desire to see Britain and Britain's kindly Queen.

He soon had them dressed in European fashion, in jackets and trousers of duck; a costume all in white, that made them look darker in skin than they really were.

They became fairly good sailors in time, however, and were most obedient to command.

Very great friends of Teenie's did those white-jacketed, converted savages become. Like most girl children who have been born and bred in the country, Teenie was fond of horses. So she would put a bit in the mouth of one, with long ribbons as a bridle, and mounting on the neck of the other, who represented the dog-cart, crack her little whip, and drive madly round and round the decks, till even those sturdy natives themselves would confess to feeling tired.

What a long long voyage was before those mariners! Twenty thousand miles and over. Can you conceive of such a distance, reader?

Yet, on the whole, they were lucky, and had favouring breezes.

They visited many little fairy isles, but only when the natives were friendly, and brought fruit and fish to barter for beads and gaily-coloured cotton cloth.

As this cloth can be bought in England for about twopence a yard, it is an excellent thing to

barter with ; and glass beads are certainly cheap enough.

Some of the islands on which they landed—I really forget their names—were large and mountainous, and inhabited by peace-loving natives, who made them heartily welcome—*islands of romance ; islands of dell and dingle, adown which rivulets, with water clear as crystal, ran singing to the sea.*

The hills or mountains on these islands were often wooded to the very top, but from betwixt the tall tree stems, our two young heroes, with Teenie and Johnnie Smart, could catch glimpses of the distant sea, than which no ocean in all the world can look brighter or bluer—*islands of woods, but islands of wild flowers as well, that carpeted all the earth, and covered and clung to the trees, embracing and beautifying everything.*

Islands too of bright-winged birds, and of splendidly Nature-painted butterflies, that, as they floated in the sunshine, looked like animated fans.

Four-winged dragon-flies often went whirring past. These were of very large dimensions, and shining in crimson, blue, or gold.

In little pools or tiny backwaters by the river, it was a treat for the boys, and for Teenie most of all, to see one or two great butterflies, with wings as broad as an envelope, alight and wade gingerly into the water to bathe their bodies and legs, and even their eyes and heads. But they folded their wings during the bath—it would not suit their purpose to wet these.

And here, too, were kingfishers of such lovely colours

that it would be worth a naturalist's while to come and study there, although he should have to live in the islands for months.

Nothing did our heroes find either that could hurt, apart from the ever busy ever bloodthirsty mosquito, or some jet-black wasps that made their nests or paper hives on the lime-trees.

Re the mosquito, although it may be a digression—and you are at liberty therefore to skip it—I would like to tell my readers something curious. The same holds good, you will understand, about the mosquito's second cousin, the gnat, who dwells in Merrie England, and sucks our blood by night.

Well then, first and foremost, it is only the lady-mosquito who bites and bleeds us; the gentleman mosquito is quiet and social. After she has filled herself with blood, she seeks out some quiet spot near to a pool of stagnant water. There she meditates on things in general for five or six days. Then off she flies, and alighting gently on the water, lays her eggs, and—drops down dead. After floating about a few days, the eggs give birth to tiny swimming *larvæ*. These swim about and grow fast, frequently casting their skins to allow of expansion.

Later on they pass into the nymph stage, and soon float on the top of the water. After a time, the shell or little coffin cracks along the top, and out comes a pure white mosquito. He stands on his empty shell till he photographs down to his proper colour, and his wings get dry and rigid. Then away he flies, with all

the sunny world before him. I don't respect the mosquito, and the larva for its size is a perfect tiger, eating everything it can come across, if soft enough—even the dead body of its late mother is devoured, so that these wild islands of the Pacific contain not only cannibal men, but cannibal mosquitoes.

But limes were not the only fruit on those charming isles. There were oranges, plantains, and bananas, the luscious and flesh-like pomolo, the pine-apple, the ubiquitous cocoa-nut and guavas, that tasted like strawberries smothered in cream.

The *Zingara* took in thousands of cocoa-nuts, also cassava-root, and many boxes of arrowroot, besides gum-copal, and nutmegs and spices.

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Fain would they have landed at Borneo; but some kind of internecine war was going on there, and Antonio had no desire to be mixed up therein. So on he went past Singapore, far to the north, through the Straits of Sunda, 'twixt Sumatra and Java, and in a few weeks' time they found themselves far away on the blue bosom of the Indian Ocean, sailing west and by south, and bearing up for the heath-clad hills that stand sentry over Capetown.

BOOK III

ADRIFT ON AN ECHOLESS OCEAN

“ When descends on the Atlantic
 The gigantic
Storm wind of the equinox,
 . . . in his wrath he scourges
 The toiling surges,
Laden with sea-weed from the rucks.

And from wrecks of ships, and drifting
 Spars uplifting,
On the desolate, rainy seas—

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
 On the shifting
Currents of the restless main.”

—LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER I

MUTINY AND DEATH

“I TELL you what it is, Petersen, you’re a muff and a coward, and I guess that is pretty plain English. What say you, maties?”

There were nine of them in all, and they sat or lay on the grass, half-way up a beautiful mountain side that overlooks picturesque little Jamestown, the capital of this lovely isle of the sea—St. Helena—on which, in his lonely mansion at Longwood, Napoleon Bonaparte breathed his last.

Yes, yonder is the town, with its snow-white houses straggling up the bonnie glen; just beyond is the harbour or roadstead, in which, slowly moving to the heave of the swell, are many ships from many nations. A saucy British cruiser is there at anchor, her white ensign streaming gaily out against the background of water. Yonder is a German, and farther off the Stars and Stripes of a bold Yankee merchantman, and at least a dozen others, with dark boats passing to and fro the shore, the men singing as they bend to their work, the water dripping from their oars, and sparkling like precious stones in the sunshine.

Beyond is the blue, blue sea itself, patched here and there with the shadows of fleecy clouds, that float in the azure sky.

All around the glade, where the men of the *Zingara* are holding their meeting, the tall cactuses are growing, with flowers of scarlet and carmine.

The songs of the boatmen are borne up the hill, with the buzz and murmur of the streets; but so faint and low that they sound like a gentle lullaby, to which the boom of the waves that break on the black rocks or beach forms a strange and dreamy bass.

Such sights, such sounds, on so sunny a day as this, might well be supposed to lull the fiercest passions that ever dwelt in human breast. In this case the poetry and romance of sea and shore are lost on the men here assembled.

Alas! it cannot conquer the lust and fiendish greed of gold that inspire this meeting.

Petersen sprang to his feet.

"Elman," he cried, "stand up and repeat those words; stand up like a man, and we'll soon see who is the coward and the muff."

But a Finn held up his hand.

He seemed to be the leader and chairman of this mutinous assembly.

"Boys," he cried, "there shall be no fighting, no disputes. We must hold together through thick and thin; to quarrel means to fail. Now," he added, "I'm a plain-spoken man. Elman, you've got to apologise

to good Petersen"—the Finn produced a pistol as he spoke. "You've got to apologise, or we can soon arrange for you to sleep beneath the cactus."

Elman advanced, and shook hands with Petersen, who grasped his manfully.

Then pipes were lit, and there was a lull in the conversation, broken at last by Petersen himself.

"Men," he said, "let us try to arrange this little affair, without unnecessary bloodshed or violence. Antonio has been good to me; *he* must be spared. Little Teenie has got round all our hearts: her life is sacred! Is it not so, boys?"

"Yes! yes!" from all save one. He too was a Finn, of the lowest caste. His bushy eyebrows and fiendish looks proved him to be a man who would stick at nothing to gain an end.

He helped himself from a flask of arrack, so strong that it made even his eyes flash and water.

"I've been on jobs of this sort afore," he said, "and my motto has always been——"

"What?" said Elman.

"A dark night, and a bloody blanket!"

Even Petersen shuddered as he heard these fearful words.

But the leader lifted his hand.

"I agree with Petersen," he cried, "that there must be no bloodshed—if possible."

"And what is more," he added, "we are strong enough to do the work without—that is, if every man is true to his oath, and obedient to command."

“Bravo!” from several voices.

“We are not all here, by several,” he added. “Even Antonio would have been suspicious had we all come on shore.”

“What about the black fellows?” said a voice.

“They are fools enough to be true to the old man.”

“Yes, if we let them.”

“Right,” said the leader. “They alone may be quietened. But, boys, the game is worth playing. There are enough precious pearls in that ship to make us all rich for life. Now, men, the oath.”

Every would-be mutineer stood up, and formed a circle around their leader.

Heaven forbid I should defile my pages by describing that scene. It ill accorded with the beauty of the day, with the sylvan scenery, with those gorgeous banks of flowering cactus, or the sweet trilling of bright-winged tropical birds in the thickets adjoining.

They had just got seated once again, when a merry childish voice was heard, and next moment Teenie herself ran out from the cactus, laughing and shouting.

She rushed straight for Petersen, and flung her arms round his neck.

“Where have you left your maid, darling?” he said.

“Oh, I just runned away from her. I is all alone. Miss Leona is in the town.”

"Have you been in the bush long?" This from the leader.

"Bush? What is that?"

"Among the cactus, yonder."

"Oh, quite five minutes. I was listening."

"She must die," said the ugly Finn. "It is for our salvation." He spoke in his own language, but even those who understood it not could easily understand its meaning.

Petersen took out his knife, and laid it ominously down by his side.

"If she dies, I die," he said, in the same language.

"Listen, dear," he continued, turning the child's face up towards his own. "Tell us what you saw and heard?"

She clasped her hands in a devotional attitude.

"Oh," she cried, "you is good *good* men, and I loves you all. You were saying you' prayers. That was all, and I not like to 'sturb you. So I stay till you is quite finished."

"Now then, men," said Petersen, "are you quite satisfied? Is there a man here who would injure a hair of this innocent head? If so, let him come into the wood with me."

"We are all satisfied," cried the men. Only the auburn-haired, fiend-faced Finn said nothing.

The *Zingara* was once more at sea, and the wind was blowing free and fresh. Birds from the far-off islands or shores were floating in the air around her,

and the very waves seemed to join in their wild and happy song.

Fore and aft the decks were clean and white, not a rope's end uncoiled, not a trace that was not taut. Our heroes, Barclay and Davie, were briskly walking fore and aft on the lee-side of the deck, the thoughtful Antonio on the weather.

It was a day that would have made the heart of the veriest land-lubber jump for joy.

And yet the officers of this ship are standing on a veritable volcano, which may burst at any moment, though they know it not.

The mutineers have determined at all hazards to capture the *Zingara*, to land the officers and others on some island, and proceed to South America, to dispose of both ship and cargo.

But a storm of a different kind is brewing that will delay the mutiny—for a time, at all events.

Archie Webber comes on deck and approaches the captain.

"Glass going tumbling down, sir," he says, "and look! look! why, the storm-clouds are banking up yonder already."

"All hands on deck!" was the order that followed. The men came tumbling up, eager and anxious.

"Lay aft here, lads," shouted Antonio.

The order was instantly obeyed, though the sworn mutineers lagged a little. Their evil consciences smote them. Oh, not with remorse! They merely imagined that Petersen had split. The ugly Finn

stood close behind this sailor, determined that if his suspicions were correct he should immediately plunge his knife into his back.

"Men," cried Antonio, "there is a storm gathering, and soon to burst, that I mean to be ready for and to fight, for the sake of the good ship that has borne us through so many dangers and trials."

The mutineers exchanged glances, and the evil Finn edged still nearer to poor Petersen. His hand was on that ugly knife.

"Look to windward, lads. Hear the muttering thunder! We have twenty minutes and no more to trim ship, for unless I am much mistaken we are to have about the biggest thing in tornadoes that ever went whirling over the Atlantic.

"Away aloft there, lads, and get in sail; set the storm-jib, mate, and I've little doubt we shall weather it. Now, men, merrily does it. Away!"

The mutineers breathed more freely now; and right cheerily they worked. In an incredibly short time all sails were taken in that could be done without. The rest were close reefed.

When they came below again, the steward, honest Pandoo, was ready to splice the main brace; and never was a glass of rum better deserved.

I am not going to describe this terrible war with the elements; suffice it to say that it was fearful, and that it ended in a gale.

The *Zingara* emerged therefrom, almost a total wreck.

Two masts, the mizen and the main, had gone almost by the board; there remained of them only the jagged stumps. The fore-topsail was also carried away, and the rudder itself was all but useless. They had been drifted away far from their course.

The boats had been taken in-board. There were five of these altogether, but being turned bottom upwards on the deck, they had luckily escaped injury.

"To-night!" said or rather whispered the leader of the mutineers.

"To-night!" The word was passed round, and every one knew that the hour had all but arrived.

By seven bells in the first watch the wind had gone down. Not a breath of air; not a zephyr to ruffle the oily, heaving waves.

Once more the good ship was but like a log on the great waters, drifting helplessly at the mercy of the current.

Our heroes and all aft had turned in. Even Antonio was sound asleep, and both mates also, for the bo's'n was now permitted to keep watch.

Barclay Stuart was awakened by an ugly dream. He started and listened.

Then his heart almost stood still. There was the sound of scuffling on deck—the noise of a fierce fight coming aft and aft, till it raged on the very quarter-deck.

"Down below with them!" This he knew to be the voice of that bloodthirsty Finn, whom he had never trusted.

"Tumble the darkies overboard!"

But some one was heard interceding.

It was Petersen.

"No, no," he cried, "spare them. No bloodshed."

"Over they go without bloodshed. Leave the bloodshed to the sharks."

There were shrieks for mercy now — ah! dear reader, mutiny is a fearful thing—then the sound of heavy bodies falling into the sea told the awful story.

In less time than it takes me to write it, every one in the saloon cabins was astir.

They rushed to—I was going to say arms. Alas! these were all gone. They were therefore helpless.

At the same time the good men and true had been driven below to the saloon, into which they rushed for safety's sake.

Several were bleeding from wounds, and one poor fellow fell dead by the stove immediately after entering.

Then the saloon doors were closed, and barricaded outside by the mutineers.

The ship was captured no doubt, though what the end might be no one could even guess. Yet the prisoners in the saloon dreaded the very worst. Had their arms not been taken away, they would have sold their lives dearly. As it was, if the mutineers meant to murder them, it would be a mere massacre in cold blood.

No bells were struck to-night; but the saloon clock pointed to the hour of two. It would be over four long hours yet, then, ere the red sun leapt up from the sea and daylight began.

Daylight? Yes, and every one seemed to feel it would be their last day on earth.

Antonio knew well that as soon as morning broke those fiends incarnate would commence to loot the ship—and the fate of the prisoners would be too dreadful to contemplate.

Yet this weird little Captain Antonio did all he could to cheer every one around him up. It was a sad task and a difficult, for the shadow of death seemed to have settled on every heart, a gloom that kept all silent. Even Teenie herself, who would sit nowhere but on Barclay's knee, was sad and fearful. Again and again she asked the boy the question—

“What will they do, Barc? What will the bad men do to us?”

For a whole hour Miss Leona sat weeping.

At last she started to her feet and dried her tears.

“Captain Antonio,” she said quietly, “we still can pray.”

“We can,” was the solemn reply.

Miss Leona's prayer was earnest, pleading, pathetic.

“Yet not our will but Thine be done,” she concluded. And I think he or she is a true Christian who can *pray* these words from the inmost heart. Then at her request, some of the beautiful verses from that psalm of psalms, the twenty-third, were sung:—

“The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill :
For Thou art with me ; and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still."

.

The only one missing in the saloon was strangely enough the fat boy Johnnie Smart, and considerable anxiety was felt as to his fate. Surely he too could not have joined the mutineers.

But about half-past three o'clock on that eventful night, a single low knock was heard at the door of the saloon, and a moment after a piece of paper was passed in under it.

It was a letter from Johnnie. Only an ill-spelt, badly written scrawl ; but it rejoiced the hearts of all inside nevertheless, and raised hopes within them.

It was Leona who read it first.

"God has heard our prayers," she said. "He will even yet give us the victory."

Then she handed the note to Antonio.

CHAPTER II

THE DOOM OF THE MUTINEERS

JOHNNIE SMART'S note ran as follows :—

“ Which I is a-makin' on 'em berlieve I'se the biggest mootineer hout. They is now a clammerin' for grog. Said I'd go aft and ax ye. I goes back now to say what I knows 'll please 'em. Which I means to save Teenie and ye all, if I can. Will let ye out when the time comes. Keep up yer peckers, I says, says I, and trust to yours truly,

“JOHNNIE SMART.”

We will follow Johnnie forward.

The mutineers, completely armed with knives and pistols, were seated in the galley. They had been eating; now they were smoking, and talking low together.

It was determined that as the ship was now an unmanageable hulk, they should first seize all the gold and pearls—with as little bloodshed as possible; then leave in two of the boats, and make their way to the nearest island. Here it would be easy to explain that they were the only survivors of a merchant ship—the *Juno*, for example—and so secure a passage to London.

"As soon's daylight comes in the work begins," said the evil Finn, feeling the edge of his knife, and smiling grimly to himself.

"Ah! here comes Johnnie," cried Petersen.

"Now, Johnnie, what about the grog?"

"Which I never axed for it," was the quiet reply.

"Never asked for it," cried the leader. "Go back at once and tell them from me, that if the rum is not at once handed out we'll commence shooting through the door."

"Don't try to fool with us," said another fellow, "else we'll knife you, sure's your name is John."

"Ay, that will we," from several.

"Look 'ere," replied the boy. "Which I'se doin' all for the best. Listen—I knows Captain Antonio, and he is as wise and wicked as——"

He pointed with his finger downwards, instead of completing the sentence.

"Go on," cried Petersen.

"Mind, then, he ain't a chap as 'ill stand much 'umbug."

"He's our prisoner, lad, and we've drawn the wasp's sting. They haven't even a knife to make a flourish with."

"Listen again," said Johnnie. "If Antonio's going to die, we've all got to go up together."

"Explain."

"Which the magazine is connected with a hellectric wire. All that the hold man's got to do is to touch a button, and——"

The men were for a moment paralysed with terror.

"Now the reason I didn't ax for grog like is this: he might ha' pized it, see!"

"Bravo! Johnnie, you're good and wise."

"All the same," said the leader, "a glass all round would be precious handy."

"Well," said Johnnie, his eyes getting wider than usual, "I could tell ye how to get it. But that beast Shenkoff, he torked about knifin' I. I'se got a knife too, and——"

"Bah!" cried the leader, "he didn't mean it. Shenkoff, if you're going to make yourself so darned disagreeable, we'll have to do without you. That's a fair warning. Now, Johnnie, how are we to get the rum?"

Johnnie sheathed his knife.

Then he held back his head, and laughed in the old way.

"As simple as sinning," he replied.

"Stop a minute," he added.

Aft he went, and returned shortly with three sharp adzes and two saws.

"D'ye catch on, men?" he asked.

"No, Johnnie, no."

"Take off your boots, and follow Johnnie. Just three on ye—no more."

He handed an adze to each; he himself carried a saw.

As soon as they were on deck under the stars, and a bright scimitar of a moon, that silvered all

the calm and heaving sea, Johnnie whispered to his followers—

“We scuppers the deck right over the store-room. Down we goes, and there’s the rum.”

Those below heard with fear and trembling the blows and thuds on the upper deck abaft the saloon.

“They’re scuppering the deck to descend to the spirit-room,” said Archie the mate.

“Heaven be praised!” cried Antonio, “even in that there is a ray of hope.”

In less than ten minutes a hole had been made through the upper deck. A candle was lit, and down went one of the men. Shortly after, the door leading to the saloon was barricaded. Then first one huge black jack, and then another, was hauled up.

These were coolly emptied into a bucket, another bucket was filled, and once more the men went forward.

Just an hour after this, the prisoners could tell that the rum was doing its work. Maudlin songs, and the sound of revelry, rose higher and higher.

But there was no quarrelling.

These sounds, however, died gradually away, and by three bells in the morning watch not a sound was to be heard in the ship.

Twenty long weary minutes passed by; each minute seemed an hour.

At last, at last!

The fastenings were being undone, and the door was opened.

It was Johnnie, sure enough.

But before he could enter or even speak, he had to hold back his head several times, his eyes taking refuge behind his fat cheeks, and laugh low to himself.

"All drunk as biled owls," said the fat boy at last, "and a-sleepin', jist like babes as ever was."

Then he handed Antonio a basket: seven loaded revolvers and as many daggers lay within.

"We are saved," cried Leona. "Heaven has heard our humble prayers."

"Mi'd you'd better look main sharp," said Johnnie, "and not shout t'll you'se clear o' the wood."

But he told Antonio that every mutineer was disarmed, and that all that was required now was to batten down the deck before they should awake.

The noise inseparable from this, however, did awaken the drunken men.

They were like a hive of hornets.

"Stand down," roared Antonio. "The first head that pops up above the ladder will have a bullet through it."

The mutineers held back.

"Who is the traitor?" cried the evil Finn. "'Tis you, Petersen! You! Have that!"

There was the sound of a horrid blow delivered with some blunt instrument, then for a moment all was still.

"Now," continued Antonio, "I have to inform

you that the tables are turned. Better go to sleep till eight bells. Then I'll shoot a few of you, to encourage the others."

.

The sun rose soon. Every wave caught up its rosy light; and even far in the west, the clouds that erst were grey and purple, were now ablaze with crimson and fiery gold.

And now, with the assistance of two of the black men who had escaped death, the largest boat was got out and swung overboard, a bagful of biscuits and a small cask of water was placed in the bows, and the boat was then lowered to the sea.

An armed guard was next formed around the hatchway, and the battennings at once cast off.

"One at a time now, men. No arms of any sort. Not even a chunk of wood."

"Archie and Barclay Stuart, you will see the men into the boats. Keep the pistol to their heads, and shoot the first man that even looks defiant."

"Ay, ay, sir," from the mate and our hero. But the mutineers were stupid, heavy-headed, and thoroughly cowed.

All but two came up, and were allowed to descend to the boat.

"Davie Drake," said Antonio now, "you go aft and look after Miss Leona and Teenie. On no account let them come forward."

"Now then, Shenkoff and Matteo" (this was the leader), "on deck, and be quick about it."

They came slowly, fearfully up, and were immediately seized and bound.

A brief court-martial was held, and they were condemned to die.

The faces of these two villains, as they stood on the fo'c's'le head, were pale and haggard.

Right well they knew their hour had come. There was no relenting in Antonio's face, no mercy there, but justice—stern, determined.

“Busy yourselves now, lads,” the captain said to the two blacks.

They did; the fore-yard was squared, a block and tackle—a long rope with a noose on the end—was rigged at each point.

Then down came the blacks, and slipped the nooses over the necks of the condemned men.

“I will give you five minutes,” said Antonio, “to pray.”

Whether those murder-stained villains prayed or not may never be known. We do know, however, that the thief on the cross was forgiven, and that—

“As long's the lamp holds on to burn,
The greatest sinner may return.”

And now the captain fired a pistol in the air, and the black men did their duty.

In a few minutes all was over. The murderers were lowered.

Two sullen plashes were heard as their bodies were thrown into the sea, where they floated a moment, then slowly sank.

The boat was next ordered to cast off. Not a word more was said on either side, and by ten o'clock the cutter had disappeared beneath the eastern horizon.

The mutiny was at an end.

That same forenoon, the bodies of Petersen and the poor fellow who had sunk to death beside the stove, were sewn in hammocks with shot at their feet, and laid aft on a grating.

Few and short were the prayers that were said ; but the bodies were committed to the deep. As Antonio spoke the last words the grating was tilted ; two solemn booming plashes, and all was over.

Their souls were commended to the God who gave them.

There were tears in the captain's eyes as he turned away, and both Barclay and Davie were greatly affected.

"Heigh-ho !" said Antonio, "I could have trusted Petersen with anything."

Then he dashed his hand across his eyes, and was himself again once more.

CHAPTER III

THE DREAD STILLNESS BROKEN BY A WAILING SHRIEK

THERE were still left on board the *Zingara* enough hands to work the ship. From captain to Kroo-boys, as the darkies were called, there were just seventeen all told, leaving out of count Miss Leona and sweet wee Teenie.

Bitter were the tears the little lass shed when she heard that the evil men had killed poor Petersen.

"There is some good in that man whom children love, sir, I think," said Archie.

"As true a word as e'er was spoken," replied Antonio.

"And now, mate, we must see to ourselves. Davie must take the boatswain's watch."

"Poor faithful fellow, no doubt he was the first man slain!"

"But, sir, where may we not drift to? We are but a wreck; we haven't a spare spar to rig a jury main or mizen mast, and the rudder is useless."

"The rudder we must try to unship," said Antonio, "hoist on deck, and see to."

"That will be an all but impossible task, for we have no mizen to reeve block and tackle to."

And so it proved.

They were, indeed, little more than a helpless floating wreck.

The *Zingara* was drifting northwards, her latitude about 22° north, and western longitude about 30° .

An attempt was made for several days to steer the vessel by means of boats ahead. This was hard work; yet it might have been successful, and they might have eventually found themselves in the track of ships, had a breeze sprung up.

They appeared, however, to be in a region of calms.

In very truth, they were drifting into that great ocean backwater, the Sargasso Sea, which I speak of in my Preface.

The Sea of Sargasso might be described as a kind of meadow-land of floating weeds, as large at times as half Europe, but often divided into canals that are continually opening and closing.

It lies midway in the Atlantic, but well out of the track of ocean steamers, except when it shifts its position to north or south. Latitude might be from 20° to 30° ; longitude from 25° to 50° .

Until the unfortunate *Zingara* drifted helplessly into this great lone sea of weed, little was really known of it and its strange inhabitants.

Long, long ago the ships of Columbus passed through some outlying streams of this wonderful Gulf weed, and when they did so his superstitious sailors began to murmur, and beseech the intrepid

explorer to put back, "for," they said, "God Himself is showing His displeasure at your foolhardiness."

But Columbus had but one motto, and that was, "Advance!"

Many and many a good ship has been entombed in this wondrous sea of weeds, and never got free till one by one the crew died, and there came to them that freedom which comes to us all sooner or later.

I had, when beginning this chapter, thought of describing the course of the great Gulf Stream, which, starting from Africa, sweeps across towards Brazil and the Gulf of Mexico; then north, and away to Newfoundland; then on and east to Northern Europe, past our own coasts here, and southward, to Africa, once again. But I need be no more explicit. In a story one cares little for unnecessary lectures on the science of geography or anything else.

Suffice it to say that the region of almost perpetual calms and Sea of Sargasso lies in the centre of the sweeping circle of the second branch of the Gulf Stream.

It is said to be a smooth and almost motionless basin; but, as will be seen, our heroes did not always find it so.

One day a man at the foretop masthead shouted—

"Sea of dark water right ahead, sir."

Antonio and the first mate both went up to have a look.

"That is the terrible Sea of Sargasso," said Antonio.

“God alone can help us if we get engulfed in that.”

Boats were had out now, and all the afternoon struggled to keep the ship away.

But thickest darkness fell, and the boats were hoisted.

They would resume their efforts next day. No sooner, however, did the sun appear than, to their horror, they found the thick, dark sea of weeds closing rapidly in all around them.

The explanation is easy; they had drifted far into a huge gulf or bay, and the horns thereof had now closed up behind them.

“Who enters here leaves hope behind.”

This they well might have said, for by noon there was no blue water to be seen even from the masthead, nothing but the brown-black sea, close aboard of them the dark trailing weeds, lifting their folds on the water till it seemed a veritable ocean of great sea-snakes.

It was probably the first time since sailing away from Merrie England that our heroes had seen Captain Antonio dull and depressed. He retired to his cabin complaining of not feeling over well, and remained there alone for three long hours.

Then while still dozing a soft little hand was laid in his, and a sweet girlish voice said sympathisingly—

“’Tonio, ’Tonio, you isn’t ill, is you?”

He roused himself at once, and smiled as he patted her hand.

He had given way for a time to a depression that was almost selfish ; but now he remembered that he was the centre, as it were, of all the life on board, and had duties to perform, which he determined not to shirk.

"Oh, dearie," he replied, "I had a little bit of a headache, you know, but it is better now."

"Wait!" cried Teenie.

She went off at the run, but by-and-by returned, walking rather unsteadily, because she bore in her two hands a large cup of fragrant tea.

"Oh, thank you, Teenie. I'm so pleased."

He drank the tea, and in another hour walked into the saloon, to all outward appearance his own old self again.

"Glad indeed to see you, sir," cried Barclay.

"And so we all are," said Archie the mate. "You feel better?"

"Oh yes. Presently I will sing and play to you as usual."

"What have you done, mate?"

"Oh, I've taken in the jib, and just clewed up, you know. Perhaps, though, our imprisonment in this terrible sea will not be for many weeks."

Antonio smiled somewhat sadly, but replied, "Mate, we are not going to despair, come what may. Despair never did any good."

"Besides, I have already discovered," said Archie, "that we are still drifting, although sometimes our bows are pointing to the nor'ard and sometimes broadside or stern."

"Have you taken soundings?"

"Yes, and the water is of no great depth. It ranges from seventeen to twenty fathoms."

"Good! and now let us try to be cheery. To-morrow we will muster by open list, and also survey our stores."

"Teenie, dearie," he cried.

Teenie came running at his call.

"You don't like storms, do you?"

"Oh no, 'Tonio; I don't like the sea when it wobbles and splashes *too* much, you know."

"Well, dearie, here in this dark weedy ocean there will be no wobbling and never a splash, and you shall catch fish all day if you like, and be as happy as a dickie-bird."

"Oh, that will be jolly. Won't it, Barclay?"

"Perfectly jolly!" laughed our young hero.

There was a good quarter of an hour's silence after this.

Everybody appeared to be thinking except Teenie, who was making love to Muffie the cat and talking low to her.

"I say, sir," said Barclay Stuart at last, "we have resolved ourselves into a kind of Quaker's meeting, but it would be interesting to know what we've been all thinking about."

"Well, you begin," said Antonio, smiling.

"*I've* been thinking that we'll have a real good quiet time of it for six months in this strange sea, and that Davie Drake and I will by that time be fit

to pass our exams for chief officers as soon as we get back to Merrie England."

"And I've been thinking," said Davie, "about our dear old home at Fisherton. What a long, long time it seems since we left!"

"Oh," said Barclay, "I haven't forgotten my mother and Phoebe, and the letters we got at the Cape telling us how well they were gave me such joy.

"But ah!" he added, "if we are detained long here they may give up hope, and the grief may kill my dear, kind mother."

"I've been thinking," said Archie, "about my log-book, and how little there will be to put in it."

"My dear mate," interrupted Antonio, "there will be far more than you imagine. It won't be merely the temperature of water and air, the wind, the current, and all that, for I've been thinking about adventures that will make your hair stand up like bristles."

"I've been thinking," said Teenie, "about fishes to catch for Muffie and me."

Well, presently Pandoo himself appeared with the supper, and after this every one was of better cheer, and far more hopeful.

But nearly all the talk to-night was about their far-off friends and homes in Merrie England.

There had been letters at the Cape of Good Hope for all the saloon and petty officers, to say nothing of the men.

Even Teenie's father had got some one to write

for him to his little daughter, for the good honest fellow was not ashamed to confess that he was "no scholard."

But at the Cape also Antonio had insisted on not only Teenie, but Miss Leona as well, having a thorough new rig-out, as he phrased it, "low and aloft," and so neither would want for clothes for a year to come at least.

Teenie after supper stole on tiptoe to the captain's cabin, and presently appeared, lugging along the great guitar, which was nearly as big as herself.

"Play and sing," she said or commanded, as she handed Antonio the instrument.

"Come, lads," cried the weird little man, dashing his fingers across the strings, "let us cast care to the winds. There is, you know—

"A sweet little cherub who sits up aloft,
To look after the life of poor Jack."

Archie laughed.

"He must squat in the foretop then," he said, "as we've got neither main nor mizen for his convenience."

Song after song did Antonio sing, to the delight of his listeners. His whole soul seemed to well out from the strings of that guitar, so sweet, so sad and low.

But he finished at last.

"Four bells," he said, looking at the clock.

"Well, boys all, it is time to turn in."

"But, captain, not before we return thanks to

Heaven for our marvellous escape from cruel death. He—our Father—you know, gave us the victory.” This from Sister Leona.

“In that case,” said Antonio, “let us call all hands aft.”

The men gladly gathered in, and no more solemn little service was perhaps ever held at sea.

It was Davie’s watch, and he now retired to walk the deck till midnight, Barclay going with him for company’s sake.

The moon, which was but a waning one, had not yet risen, and the night was very dark, for thick black clouds obscured the sky, and seemed to be banked up on all sides and close aboard of the doomed ship.

There was hardly a breath of wind, and the deep mysterious silence was almost awesome.

Scarcely did our two boy heroes care to speak above a whisper.

Sometimes they paused in their walk and leant over the bulwark listening.

What did they hear in the darkness? Only this, a strange mysterious whispering sound, coming from what direction they could not tell. It was as if that dark and solemn ocean of weeds were trying to tell them its awful story from times long, long forgotten, till the present age.

But presently both started with an almost nervous tremor, for from afar off apparently rose a melancholy wail or shriek. Again and again it was repeated, but finally died away in the distance.

No more weird and mournful wail probably ever broke the silence of the sea.

Antonio himself came gliding to their side and laid a hand on the shoulder of each.

They started and looked quickly round.

"It is Antonio. Don't be alarmed."

"But did you not hear those awful wailing screams?"

"Yes, I did, boys, and they are often heard here. They make the bravest men nervous, and sailors say it is the ghosts of men who have entered this strange sea, never, never to leave it more, and whose clay-covered skeletons lie deep in the bottom of the ocean."

"But you do not believe that, sir?"

"No, Barclay. No, I am not so superstitious. I put them down either to wild birds, or to a curious fish found here, called the piping shark. It is said that it appears but for a few minutes above the water, utters those awful sounds, and sinks again into the sea's dark depths."

Next day Antonio did as he had intended, and held a general survey on the quantity and condition of the stores.

The verdict communicated to our heroes and the first and second mates was this: "With economy, and if the tinned meats keep in good condition, we have food enough to last a year."

"A year," said poor Paddy M'Koy. "Ach, sure

it is joking entirely you are, sorr. It's never a year we'll lie in this black sea."

The captain shook his head sadly.

"I was to have been married, sorr, on my return to Dublin to one of the purtiest girls in Ould Ireland. Och and och, and what will become of her at all, at all?"

"Paddy," said the captain, "we have all a duty to each other to perform."

"And what is it thin, sorr?"

"To appear hopeful and cheerful, whether we feel it or not."

But Paddy only sighed and went below.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT A WORLD OF LIFE WAS EVERYWHERE AROUND THEM

FOR a whole month the weather continued calm, and what under other circumstances might have been called delightful. Yet to these unfortunate mariners, cast away in a sea so lonesome and still, there were indeed but few delights.

For their first month I don't think that any one did much else save read. Antonio had a handsome little library, and although there were in it many books of science, especially those relating to astronomy and electricity, still there were scores of what might have been called books of amusement, novels, plays, and the works of the greater poets.

I but mention the effects their imprisonment had on all hands as a strange psychological fact.

During this time the monotony of their existence was most keenly felt. The stillness of the air, the currentless quiet of the slowly heaving sea, the snake-like movements of the rising and falling brown weeds—all tended to cast a gloom over the mind that amounted almost to a low or nervous fever.

But in six weeks' time there seemed to be a change for the better. Even Paddy himself recovered a deal of his old rollicking spirits, and when, down below one night, he volunteered a song to an accompaniment played by Miss Leona, Antonio felt that he was over the worst. It was one of Erin's sweetest, mayhap saddest, songs, which has about it, nevertheless, a deal of sunshine and true beauty.

"There's not in the wide world a valley so sweet,
As the dear little vale where the waters do meet ;
Ah ! the last rays of sunshine and life shall depart,
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart."

"Heigh-ho!" he sighed, after he had finished the last verse, "I'm sure it's meself would give five years av my life just to have one word wid my Kathleen, and to assure her that I wasn't dead at all, at all, but only just cast away in a sea av brown vegetables. Bother it all, what am I saying? But never mind, boys, it's out and clear we'll get one av them days, and then hurrah! for home and the ould counthrie!"

Even Teenie herself had been less bright during these first dull weeks. She had been quiet, and preferred to play with pussy and the monkeys to speaking even to Barclay.

The least unhappy person in the ship was Sister Leona, as she had come to be called; and I think it was her pure and true religion that kept her up. Indeed, her faith in the wisdom and goodness of

the Father was like that of a little child in the parents who love and watch over it.

Sunday on board was now a day of complete rest, and Sister Leona invariably conducted service in the saloon or on the upper deck.

One night moon and sky became obscured, and thick darkness brooded over the brown and lonesome sea. It was stiller and quieter than usual, but the stillness was broken at last by a peal of thunder, following a quick crimson stream of fire, that rushed quivering from aloft like a blood-red river flowing from cloudland into the sea. After this the ocean was constantly lit up all around, till it appeared all one heaving mass of billowy flame, while the crash of the thunder shook the ship from stem to stern.

The monkeys had rushed aft as soon as the storm began, and sought shelter in Teenie's and Barclay's arms. It was piteous to witness their trembling and abject fear.

No one thought of turning in until the fury of the storm had spent itself.

But next morning broke bright and clear, and seemed to instil strength, joy, and happiness into every heart.

Davie and Barclay were early astir and walking briskly up and down the deck, talking and laughing, long before the breakfast hour. And when Teenie came pattering gleefully along the deck, followed by the cat and two monkeys, the fun grew fast and

furious, and all three young folks went down to breakfast as soon as Pandoo rang his bell, with appetites that an ostrich needn't have been ashamed of.

Whether it was that the terrible thunderstorm had cleared the air, or that these poor prisoners had become acclimatised in their strange surroundings, I know not, and I do but state facts. But I have known more than one sailor who has been cast away in these dreary latitudes, and they have told me that there is a kind of fever which attacks every one at first, its most notable symptoms being lethargy, drowsiness, and great depression of spirits, but that being once acclimatised, it never comes again.

For the next few weeks there certainly was activity enough prevailing on board the good ship *Zingara*, all but a wreck though she was—activity displayed not only among the officers, but by all hands, even by the blacks.

Oh, there is nothing like busy-ness for keeping trouble at bay, and sorrow too. Indeed, as soon as a man, young or old, settles down to serious work, sorrow and worry take the huff and leap straight overboard and drown themselves; for Care can't bear to see any one industrious and happy.

Archie started the men now to tidy the ship, and they went at it with a will.

"She ain't much to look at now," said a bluejacket, "athout the main and mizen, but we'll make her as trig as a new piano. Heave round, lads," he shouted, "and trim decks."

"Good!" said Archie; "I think I can leave the men in your hands. I'm going to teach the boys a bit."

"You come up in two hours, sir," said Jack Hodder, "and see wot you sees like."

Archie was a splendid sailor and excellent scholar, and for two hours every forenoon he coached Davie Drake and Barclay Stuart.

The former was almost a man now, quite a man in his own estimation—eighteen, you know, and this made Barclay sixteen.

Well, I like such lads as these. I would not give a fig for a boy who had no pride of self, and no assurance in him. It is boys with nerve and vim that are going to make the world hum one of these days. Your dull, "dour," bashful "loons" have no more brains than a mangold-wurzel, and can never to any extent benefit themselves nor those around them.

When Archie did come on deck again he found all things sweet and nice, decks scoured and white, ropes coiled, brass and wood work polished, and the men dressed in their white ducks.

He called Jack Hodder and thanked him; then he cast his eyes aloft, and who should he see in the foretop but Teenie herself, with pussy and the monkeys. How the cat had got up was a mystery, but Muffie was no ordinary puss.

"Oh, come up, come up," she cried excitedly. "Come up, Captain Archie. Some awful, awful

beast in the water. Oh, I is feared it will swallow up the ship."

Archie hurried up the ratlines, and the sight he saw was really a strange one.

Right ahead of the ship, about a quarter of a mile, was a lake of blue water, in the centre of this brown Sargasso Sea.

About the middle of this piece of open water lay a huge whale half on her side. Archie had been to the Arctic Ocean more than once, and he knew at a glance that this was the "right whale," as Arctic sailors call it.

He sent Teenie down for Antonio.

In a few minutes the little man was standing glass in hand beside his mate.

"A most interesting discovery," he said, "because it is said that the 'right whale' never visits the Sea of Sargasso. Pah! we can give fireside philosophers the lie."

"Just watch the dear affectionate lump of a mother, and the gambols of the great ungainly calf," he continued.

"Sent down here by the husband, I could wager my smoking-cap on that. I think I hear the very conversation that took place away up among the Greenland icebergs before she came away.

"'Now look here, my dear,' the fond but colossal husband said, nibbling at his wife's starboard flipper, 'you've been looking rather pale about the snout for a week or two, and Bully (the calf) isn't so frisky

as I'd like to see him, so you run right away south to the Sargasso Sea, where you'll find warm water, sunshine, perfect quiet, and any amount of little fishes to eat among the weeds.'

"'But,' she replied, 'how about my little hubbie? What will he do all alone?'

"'Oh, I'll be all right. Big enough, you know, to take my own part.'

"'But who is to guide me?'

"'Oh, something will — a great Something, that even whales don't understand.'

"So away went the lady whale, the husband waving his tail to her as long as he could see her. And yonder she is."

"There is money there too," said Archie reflectively. "If we could——"

"Stop just right there, mate mine. Not for all the gold in Ophir would I destroy the harmony of Nature by harpooning that innocent brute."

The calf was ploughing round and round his huge and well-pleased mother—round and round, making the water fly in great green seas over her every time he struck it with his tail. But she lay more on her side at last, and those in the foretop could distinctly hear a long, low, cooing sound. Next moment the calf was as busy sucking as any baby ever was. Rough it was though, and the bumps it gave the dam every now and then made her shake and shiver like a ship in a sea-way.

But another strange thing the captain and mate

noticed was this : All around the whale and calf flew gulls in hundreds. At so great a distance it was almost impossible to note what they were. Skuas, however, black-headed and white-headed gulls, the pilot-bird, the Greenland "malley," and the beautiful ivory gull of Arctic regions were there. Their united voices filled the air with melody, and broke the stillness of this dark and silent sea.

Frequently they alighted on the whale, and seemed to be pecking at her, a liberty that the leviathan did not resent in the least.

In about half-an-hour's time, however, the monster got her back uppermost. She lifted one great flipper, the calf seemed to cuddle under it, the huge tail was set in motion, making the sea all round like a boiling caldron, then she took a header under the water. The sound was like the springing of a submarine mine or the bursting of a torpedo, and raised waves that, rolling away in circles on every side, caused even the *Zingara* for a time to rise and fall on the water and weeds.

For six months that whale and her calf were almost daily visitors to the strange open space in the water, and came to be looked upon at last as friends. It used to delight Teenie's heart to witness the somewhat awkward gambols of the calf, who was growing apace, and her only sorrow was that she could not go and play with and even kiss it.

The *Zingara* at the end of eight months appeared

to be as far from all chances of getting free as ever.

But by this time Antonio was prepared with his diving apparatus, and determined not only to study the surface of the sea and its marvels, but to visit the dark depths thereof and study wonders there.

The ship had drifted nearer to the lake of open water, which was several square miles in extent.

Here the mate found soundings on what appeared to be a sandbank at fifteen fathoms or less. It was determined therefore to let go the anchor, for it was evident that they were getting farther and farther into the sea of weeds, which no doubt stretched for many hundred miles towards the north and the west, so the anchor was dropped.

But what a world of life was everywhere around them!

It may be that some time or other an enterprising naturalist and sailor will find means of exploring this vast sea-solitude and writing a book on its flora and fauna ; but the undertaking will be as hazardous and daring as an attempt to find the Pole itself.

Antonio was brave, probably to a fault, but even he dared not risk the lowering of a boat with the view of exploring much farther from the ship than could be seen.

Says a writer in *Chambers's Journal*, "It is only natural that ships should carefully avoid the marine

rubbish heap where the Atlantic shoots its refuse. It seems doubtful whether a sailing vessel would be able to cut her way into the thick network of weed even with a strong wind behind her. Besides, if the effort were rewarded with a first delusive success, there would be the almost certain danger that in the calm regions of the Sargasso Sea the wind would suddenly fail her, leaving her locked hopelessly amid the weeds and wreckage, without hope of succour or escape.

“As regards a steamer, no prudent skipper is ever likely to make the attempt, for it would certainly not be long before the tangling weed would altogether choke up his screw and render it useless.

“The most energetic explorer of land or sea would find himself baffled as regards the Sargasso Sea. It is neither solid enough to walk upon, nor liquid enough to afford a passage to a boat.

“Of course it is quite conceivable that a very determined party of pioneers might cut a passage for a small boat even to the centre. The work would take an immense time, however, and the channel would certainly close up behind them as they proceeded.”

All these facts had been well studied and considered by Antonio.

No more daring mariner than he ever sailed the seas.

Now let the truth be told: so far into the Sargasso

Sea had the ship drifted before the anchor had been lowered, that the weird little captain had not the slightest hopes of ever getting free again. Nothing less than a miracle, it seemed, could aid them, and the only miracles nowadays are the miracles of science.

There was nothing to look forward to but imprisonment here for life. The provisions would not last for ever; they would be compelled to live on the fish they might catch among the weeds, or the little brown crabs that clung to their stems.

But this life could not last long, for fuel would fail them. Already they were dependent for water on the condensed steam from the pumping engine. When the coal was finished, water itself would no longer be attainable. The look-out was sad and terrible in the extreme. One by one, the more weakly first, they would drop off and die, till hardly hands enough would be left to bury the dead. And who would be the last man?

Alone on this sad brown sea, he must inevitably become a raving maniac, and perhaps forestall fate by throwing himself into the ocean of weeds.

You must give Antonio credit therefore for bravery and wisdom, when I tell you that he not only determined to keep all those sad forebodings to himself, but determined also to make an attempt to navigate, by means of a specially constructed boat, as much as possible of the great Sargasso Sea itself.

So well had he studied everything during his life in the romantic old windmill, that there was hardly a useful appliance of a scientific character that was not to be found on board the good ship *Zingara*.

But at night, while lying awake on his couch in the awful and deathlike stillness of this wondrous sea, poor Antonio used, at times, to lose heart.

Not that he could blame himself for seeking to amass wealth. But now, imprisoned here, although riches crowded his drawers and safe, what good could it ever be to him?

Then visions would rise up before him of his brother lying in a dark and slimy dungeon that reeked with filth and fœtor, his bed a mat on the floor amidst insects, and even reptiles, that but to think of makes one shudder, fed like a wild beast from the end of a pole, perhaps already white-headed and insane. Oh, it was awful, maddening! Then dreams of the past would take the place of these more terrible thoughts.

They were children once again, his brother and he. Living in a beautiful cottage far away among the green woods and broomy braes of Cornwall, whither their mother had emigrated from Spain—been banished, in fact—after the death, by shooting, of their father, who had taken part in an insurrection, and been chief leader.

His brother José—who was now lying in the priests' dungeon-keep—was three years his junior,

but tall, manly, and strong for his ten years, while Antonio himself was but a weakling, a pale-faced, not over-well-shapen little invalid, whom José loved and looked after as if he had been a baby, lifted in and out from his chair, or left on the daisied sward while he, José, wandered away for a time, to return laden with wild flowers.

Oh, thrice happy days, never, never again to return.

And worst of all, that fond mother—now aged and infirm—still lived, and hoped that ere cold death should close her eyes, she would once more see her boys twain.

But this might never be.

Was it any wonder, then, that even Antonio sometimes during the stillness of night broke down, and watered his pillow with tears?

Then he would sleep—and dream.

But next day—his whole heart and soul bound up in the work of making everybody around him happy and hopeful—Antonio seemed to have never a care in the world. And high above the whirr or noise of his workshop, at all hours of the day his strangely musical voice might be heard raised in song.

Teenie would take a little mandoline he had purchased for her at the Cape, and on which she could already play, and go and sit beside him for hours, accompanying him as he sang.

Idyllic this, surely.

True, but the cheery voice and the pleasant smile may hide many a deep-seated grief, as the sunshine glimmer on the waves hides the dark rocks in the black depths of the unfathomable ocean.

CHAPTER V

A LONG LOST DERELICT

THE great Greenland whale and her huge gambolling calf had gone—returned to the North, guided by instinct, let us call it, in making her way on and on day after day through the lonesome ocean. And instinct in this case is but a God-given gift.

“Reason raise o’er instinct as you can,
In this ’tis God directs, in that ’tis man.”

But many other whales were seen, and not only these, but awful sharks, even the hammer-headed *Zygæna* would at times raise their heads above the sea, and all draped in weeds, they looked triply terrible. So startling were these apparitions, that Teenie used to cry out with fear when she saw them.

The birds were a constant study. The puzzle was this: Why did these birds, and beasts, and strange creatures of various kinds, come to spend a portion of the year in so dreary an ocean?

“It seems to me,” said Antonio one evening when asked the question, “that the Sea of Sargasso is a kind of health-resort for delicate birds and beasts, such as whales and fur seals, of which we have seen so many.”

“Well, sir,” said Davie, laughing, “if you had seen the monster shark that Barclay and I saw yesterday, you would not have said there was much delicacy of constitution about him. With head and back all decorated with seaweed, and his cruel, sinful-looking eyes glaring through it, he looked a veritable fiend of the ocean wave.”

“Ah! but these sharks, you know, are the regular inhabitants, and if you have noticed, they are all dark brown like the seaweed itself. We shall see more of them, and catch many too, when we lower our diving lift.”

“Catch some?”

“Yes, the more the merrier. You see, boys, their oil will be a substitute for fuel and save the coals.”

“Is there much oil under the skin?”

“Mostly in and around the liver, lads, and there it is found in great abundance. You shall see for yourselves.”

“What are you so busily engaged at?” said Barclay next day, as he entered the captain’s canvas workshop.

Here not only two sailors were busily engaged, but Sister Leona herself.

“We are making a captive balloon,” was the answer.

About a fortnight after this the balloon was completed. A windlass was erected right aft, and to this the long, long rope was attached.

A code of signals was made out, and early one

morning Antonio himself made his first ascent to a great height. He had with him many scientific instruments and one of his best telescopes.

He was more than pleased with the experiment.

Afar off to the southward, probably one hundred and odd miles away, he could see the clear blue ocean itself. Oh, how he longed to be afloat therein once more!

But away to the north and the west nothing was visible but the brown solemn sea, with its dark covering of snakey weeds, that looked like living things as they rose and fell on the gently heaving waves.

“Ah! how many secrets,” he said to himself, “lie buried in this dreary ocean!”

He shuddered a little as he thought how the story of the disappearance of the *Zingara* might never, never be told.

But see, yonder is a hull or hulk in the water many miles to the north. There are the lower masts still sticking up from her decks—one, two, three, and a shattered bowsprit also.

Is it possible there could be life on board of that weird-like derelict?

His attention is next called to the appearance of more than one fearful-looking apparition, that bobs to and fro with a lifelike motion among the brown weeds.

Antonio is not without superstition. Can these be sea-serpents? For a moment he believes they are.

He turns the glass on the largest. It cannot be much under one hundred feet in length.

He can see its very eyes, for the head is raised well above the water, and the neck and back are covered with a black and horrible mane.

But reason comes at last to his aid, and he makes them out to be only floating trees.

Relieved now, and not a little hungry as well as tired—for high up here the air is both cool and bracing—he makes the signal for descent, and soon after is safe once more on his own quarter-deck. Every one is anxious to hear his strange story, especially our impatient little Teenie.

But he keeps it till after dinner, for the few hours 'twixt that meal and bedtime are the happiest of all the day.

Antonio, much to Teenie's delight—the child sat on his knee drinking eagerly in every word that fell from his lips—made quite a story of his aerial expedition. He called his yarn

“MY JOURNEY SKYWARDS,”

and certainly, as he related it, it lacked not interest. He interlarded it too with impromptus on the guitar, some of which were weird and wild in the extreme, but all intended to depict the state of his feelings at various stages of his adventure; as, for example, when his eyes fell upon the far-off blue and sunny sea, or when he first found out the derelict, and anon the awful sea-serpents, that finally, to Teenie's

disappointment, turned out to be floating trees, their eyes but notches, their awful manes only the trailing seaweed.

However, this determined little fisher-lassie made a resolution, which as she slid off the captain's knee she embodied in the following sentence—

“Mind you this, Captain 'Tonio, you is not going up again next time without me.”

Considering the balloon perfectly safe, Antonio agreed to let Teenie come with him on his next ascent. And brave indeed she must have been to make it. That she was a little afraid at first was indisputable. But soon she brightened up, and clapped her tiny hands with joy when she beheld the great sea-serpents through the telescope.

“But,” she said, “O 'Tonio, I 'spects they is alive after all. Just say they is to please me.”

It will be observed that Teenie's English was not so grammatical as it might have been. But she had really two dialects, that of the fireside, and that which was only taken out and aired in her school-room, then stowed away again to be used, as she phrased it, when she went on shore to some grand party.

Would that ever be?

Who could tell?

A month after this, Antonio's special boat was ready to launch.

It was an ordinary whaler, but fortified in front

with a straight up and down plough-like cutwater high up out of the sea, which divided the weeds and permitted them to fall off astern. The boat was propelled by oars in the ordinary way, but the progress was exceedingly slow, and at no time was a greater rate of speed obtained than two miles an hour.

The boat had three men a side, with Antonio and Barclay astern, and these took turn and turn steering the whaler with an oar, with a species of sculling motion well known to visitors to the far-off Arctic Ocean.

The boat was well provisioned, and carried plenty of good water.

But although they started soon after daybreak, the sun was gilding the brown ocean before they had accomplished two-thirds of the journey towards the derelict.

There was nothing for it, therefore, but to sup and to sleep till morning.

Though there was no moon, the night was charming and the stars never so bright, and apparently so close that a ship's masts might have touched them.

The constellations were especially beautiful and bright.

The silence for the most part was like that of death. Yet it was broken now and then by plaintive and uncanny screams, dying away at last in mournful cadence that touched the heart. These, as

I have said before, were put down to the credit of night-birds, or to a fish called by Antonio "the piping shark."

Towards morning something, or rather some creature, struck the bottom of the boat with such violence that she was all but capsized.

She yielded to the blow, else she would doubtless have been stove. No one could even surmise what they had come into collision with, though no doubt it was some species of monster shark. Next day the voyage was resumed. During their slow progress, Barclay had much time to study the weeds that floated close aboard of them, and the myriads of small but active creatures that lived on the surface of this strange mysterious sea.

Towards noon a flock of sea-birds of every description, some entirely unknown even to Antonio, came shrieking and screaming round the boat.

A few minutes after this they were close alongside one of the most dismal-looking derelicts it has ever been the lot of human eyes to look upon.

A veritable coffin afloat she turned out to be, a ship of the dead.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRUNCHING NOISE ADDED TO THE HORROR [OF THE SITUATION

THAT ship of the dead was a sad and fearful sight.

So high too was her hull, that it was feared at first that to board her would be impossible. But one of the sailors, making a knot on the end of a strong piece of rope, threw it up over the bulwarks, and after many unsuccessful attempts, succeeded in making it stick to something. Then he shinned up and made the end perfectly secure to an iron, but rusty, belaying pin. Antonio and Barclay both swarmed up hand over hand, till they caught the seaman's hand and alighted safely on the deck.

As our heroes were drawing near to the derelict in the boat, and as she gently swung to and fro to the scud of the seas, they were surprised to see the whole of the hull, nearly as high up as the bulwarks, covered with grey gulf weed and bivalve shells. The seaweed had been originally brown, but was now incrustated with a species of marine lichen, and the deck itself was slimy and green, so that it was difficult indeed to walk upon it, and both Antonio and Barclay looked about them in a kind of bewildered way. But

they soon recovered, and commenced to explore. They first cast their eyes aloft. The lower masts were still standing, and solid strong timber they looked; the lower rigging also, but yard-arms there were none; the jibboom and even a portion of the bowsprit were gone, and the bulwarks forward were sadly rent and torn.

Just behind the windlass were two bundles of what appeared at first to be seaweed covered with lichen. A boathook was procured, and the bundles were stirred up.

They dropped in pieces, rattling down on the deck in separate bones, for skeletons indeed they were.

This was a sickening and horrible discovery. Near them lay what seemed the skeleton of a dog.

But more horrors were to come, for diving cautiously now down the fore-hold, they found three more skeletons near the galley and cooking-range. They too were green and slimy, and the odour that pervaded these 'tween decks was so foetid and horrible, that our heroes were glad to find themselves on deck once more.

So slippery was the ladder, that it was difficult indeed to ascend it.

Slowly now, and with hearts that were inexpressibly sad, they made their way aft and down below to the cabin or saloon. They had first taken the precaution to burst open the skylight and wait for a time. It was well they did so, for the emanating odour was sickening in the extreme.

The sight that met their eyes when at last they

entered the saloon was one that would have appalled hearts less stout and brave.

On the deck lay the skeleton of a man, with a rusty revolver not far off. There was a hole in the skull right behind, so that it was evident he had not died by his own hand.

On a half-rotten and slimy sofa lay another skeleton, and, horrible to relate, the shaft of a dagger or knife still protruded from the ribs on the left side. But the bony hand and arm that had held that knife lay by the side of mortal remains.

"A certain case of suicide," said Antonio, and his voice sounded hollow and uncanny in this awful saloon.

Determined to elucidate the mystery if possible, Antonio, followed by Barclay, made his way to what seemed the chief state-room—no doubt the skipper's.

As he walked across the deck towards it, small loathsome-looking brown crabs went scuttling across and hid in the darkest corners. Some were unwittingly crushed under foot, and the crunching noise added to the horror of the situation.

With the boathook Antonio dashed open the saloon door; then all three men retreated till the foul air escaped.

In doing so Barclay kicked a hassock or foot-stool. It fell in pieces, and all started back with a feeling of fear and dread, for out from the débris wriggled two snakes, or water-serpents, of a kind not uncommon on sandbanks in the Indian Ocean.

The creatures made a dash for the companion-ladder, up which they threw themselves in a remarkable manner. The men in the boat alongside were startled to see the snakes leap from the scupper-holes of the derelict and dive into the sea.

Everything was rotten, slimy, and ghastly in this stateroom. There were curtains on the bed which gave way at a touch; the mattress and bedclothes fell to pieces when stirred with the boathook, clothes hung on the wall, but fell to the deck when Antonio entered.

But here in the corner was a safe. The door was shut but not locked, and as Barclay swung it open he found therein gold, watches, and a chronometer. These they took possession of. There was also a ship's log, but all the first portions of it and its top cover were decayed and rotten.

It was only the last few pages that were decipherable, and much to Antonio's disappointment, when he took the book carefully out and placed it on the table, he found that it gave no clue to the name of the ship, her port of departure, nor her destination.

But it told briefly and irregularly of the last terrible sufferings of the crew.

The hand that wrote these lines must have been weak and quivering, the head of the writer congested, if not delirious.

The lines, too, and sentences were strangely disconnected and rambling. I give but a portion of them.

"The last writings of Ben Meredith of Lark Cove, Mass., U.S.A.

"If found—to my wife or beloved father, both of that territory—twenty days out, fearful weather, decks swept, topmasts carried away—middle of night awful collision, carried away figure-head and jibboom, and shattered bowsprit and bulwarks—drifting for weeks a hopeless—half the crew stole boats and went away we know not whither. Took the great Sea of Gulf-Weed. Misery untold, and no hopes of ever getting clear. Water lasted, but food ran out—living on seaweed and rats—few fish caught—men down with fever—I and mate last of—terrible sufferings. Think am mad—killed boy and ate him—this ends all, and to-night we die. Mate will shoot me, then kill himself—I shall not know the hour I am to be shot—this has been agreed upon, and 'tis better thus—Heaven forgive us, but we are mad—mad—mad!"

There was more of this rambling, but it was not decipherable. But those two skeletons revealed this secret of the sea.

Long, long years ago the men had gone to their account, and He who knew their terrible sufferings and temptations would judge them mercifully and righteously.

There was little good to be wrought by staying longer on board this awful slimy derelict ship, so full of loathsome things that crept or crawled, so full of death and mystery.

After two days and a night of struggling with the weeds, glad enough were our mariners to get back to their own ship.

She was not yet overgrown with weeds, for men were lowered over the side almost every week to keep her clean.

Almost every day now the whaler with its "weed-plough," as the sailors called it, was lowered, and Barclay and Davie with a sturdy crew would penetrate as far through the Sargasso Sea as it was safe to go with the certainty of returning before nightfall.

As often as not Teenie went with them. They had a double object in view in making these little cruises—the study of natural history, with the collection of curios, and the catching of fish to help to fill the larder.

Some of these fish, mostly small, lived and dwelt in or near the surface among the long, dark, floating weed. At times they could be found in shining silvery shoals, so dense that they could be taken on board with a landing-net. These were a species of large anchovy or sardine, and evidently did not belong to the Sargasso Sea itself, for, strange to say, the crabs that ran about and over the weeds, the shell-fish that clung to them, all the crustacea, molluscs, hydroids, polyzoa, and annelides were dark-brown like the weeds themselves, and sometimes almost black. Black though they were, the crabs proved to be most delightful eating; so too did many

of the fishes caught, but others were so frightfully ugly as to look like sea-demons, and were thrown overboard; so too were some most beautiful flat fish, striped with deep crimson, yellow, and green.

These were called "tartan fish" by the men, and declared to be far too pretty to eat, and probably poisonous.

Occasionally the exploring boat came across a portion of seaweed that seemed alive with wriggling serpents. Most of these horrid reptiles, none of which were over three feet long, had short rudimentary legs near the head and far aft towards the tail. One or two found their way on board in the landing-net, and so diabolical was their appearance as they wriggled and hissed, that Teenie was frightened almost into fits.

Then Barclay would drop the landing-net overboard, and taking the child on his knee, soothe and pet her till she fell asleep.

Some of the worm-like annelides grew to immense size here in this wondrous sea, so much so, that they might have been mistaken for snakes. Specimens of each sort were collected by the boys.

But there was a kind of annelide that the boys did not dare to catch on the days when Teenie was a passenger. It was called the sea-centiped, and its bite was supposed to be fatal. It was not unlike the centiped that often appears on board ship in cases when green wood has been taken on board, only infinitely bigger, and quicker in movement.

One day a sea-centiped ran up Barclay's sleeve; it was longer than a penholder. The lad was in his shirt sleeves luckily, and probably the dreadful creature was as frightened as the boy was; indeed, he was deadly pale. Davie Drake and Pandoo came to his rescue. Commanding him not to move an inch, they pulled his shirt over head and shoulders, and gradually and cautiously down his arm till the terrible centiped was revealed. All its awful legs were pinching poor Barclay's skin, and the creature, which had hooks beneath its head, was moving its mandibles horizontally in the most threatening manner, while fire appeared to flash from its eyes. Pandoo placed a handkerchief round the boy's arm above the elbow-joint, retaining both ends in his hand.

Then all had to wait what appeared an interminable time.

But slowly at last the creature advanced, though pausing oft, and finally crawled on to the handkerchief. Then with a quick jerk Pandoo threw it off into the sea.

Barclay had behaved all the time with great fortitude, but, strangely enough, now that the danger was over he fainted dead away.

A more beautiful, but not dangerous, annelide was found among the seaweed, plentiful enough in some places only. In plain English—for I am sure you do not wish to be bothered with its classical title—it is called the sea-mouse. The creatures were nine inches long and nearly four in breadth, and were the only

living things found among the seaweed that were not brown or black.

The strange annelide finds its food among the weeds, and is covered with a kind of down. Above this are many rows of bristles in bunches, that shine and glitter with all the colours of a lovely rainbow.

Many of these were caught and preserved, but to Barclay's disgust the beautiful colours all faded away. It is thus with many of the lovely creatures one finds in the seas of far-off foreign lands, as I have known often to my sorrow. Hand-painted by Nature they seem to be, and the colours are durable until death, but then they fade away.

CHAPTER VII

THE BALLOON HAD BURST IN MID AIR

THE people of the unfortunate ship *Zingara* had now lain for more than a year and a half Crusoes in this dreary dark ocean, and food itself began to grow scarce. All that it was possible to do was done in order to eke out the store, by eating such fish and crustacea as they could find among the weeds.

I have not yet described the weeds, nor need I court classical preciseness in doing so. But there are five or six different species. The principal of these, and the largest, is of immense length, toothed and serrated. It seems to grow from a short stalk, with roots that may or may not have been torn off from the rocks of continents or islands. Be this as it may, it here lives and floats, with the aid of small bladders called berries, and it affords refuge, food, and sustenance to myriads of strange creatures. Not only is this so, but other weeds grow on it, and some of these our heroes found edible and palatable, whether eaten cooked or raw. But other species were independent of their gigantic brothers, and lived a wholly independent life, having

bunches of bladders to support them, like clusters of grapes.

Not only were stores now getting short on board ship, but coals as well, so that the outlook was becoming black and dreary in the extreme.

Antonio often broke down in spirits, and gave way to fits of melancholy in his own cabin by night, but he was always the same pleased and pleasant though weird wee man by day, especially at table.

And in the evening, with his darling guitar on his breast, he excelled himself if possible. No one to see him then could have believed that he saw only starvation and death ahead, and that he entertained scarcely the slightest hope of delivery from this living grave.

He made a balloon ascent about once a week, however, hoping against hope, as it were, that the great sea of weeds might open up, as does an ice-pack in the Arctic Ocean, and thus afford them a free passage.

But he saw no chance, and no change. They were still a hundred miles at least from the sea, whose blue waves, sparkling in the sunshine, looked so tantalising through the telescope.

The sea-gulls and birds of every sort used to come round the ship now daily, to pick up refuse and crumbs that had been thrown on board. They became indeed marvellously tame. Now, strange to

say, many of these were birds of Britain, and like all Britons, birds of passage as well. They would return to their homes on the rocks around England and Bonnie Scotland.

I was going to say happy homes, but drew rein in time, for, alas! they are not always happy, owing to the perpetual murder that goes on around our shores, by which, at the hands of shop-boys and cads with guns, the beautiful birds are killed and maimed without mercy.

"I think," said Barclay Stuart one morning, "that Davie and I have devised a means of communicating with the outer world which may result in our salvation."

"Well, dearie, I'm rejoiced to hear it. What is the scheme?"

"You know, sir, that many of the black or white-headed gulls, and the skuas and kittiwakes as well, are British birds, and that they will soon perhaps take their departure."

"Yes, they don't build here, and spring—the English spring—will soon be smiling in our own dear country."

"Well then, Davie and I propose catching those birds by the score and tying to their legs little messages in quills. If only one of all we send off—and we purpose sending hundreds—if only one is shot by those murdering 'longshore chaps, it may result in relief coming to us in a few months' time."

Antonio smiled, somewhat sadly it must be allowed.

“Don’t you like the plan?”

“I like anything that will give us even the off-chance of getting clear away, out of this black and dreary sea.

“Hurrah!” cried Barclay; “then I’ll go and tell Davie Drake.”

And away he went.

He found Davie with Sister Leona and Teenie;—the latter, by the way, was now in her fourteenth year, but still the innocent baby, the fascinating child she had always been.

“Well, and what says the captain?”

“Oh, he gives us full permission, and we had better start at once.”

“There will be no fishing to-day, Teenie.”

“But what’s you going to do?”

“Why, to catch lovely gulls and make postmen of them.”

“Make postmen of them?”

“Yes, dear; you shall see. We are going to send them with letters to England.”

“And will they bring letters back?”

“I fear not, but they may send out ships to our relief. Do you understand?”

“Now, Sister Leona, you must assist. You can write even smaller and clearer than we can.”

“Perhaps.”

“All we need to say is, ‘British ship *Zingara*

cast away. Sea of Sargasso. Lat. ——. Long. ——. (I must get this exact from the captain.) Stores done. Must soon die if no relief.'

"We have hundreds of quills. A little string must be rove through these first, to tie to the birdie's thigh, then the message put in, and the quill sealed at both ends with red wax."

"Why red wax, Barclay?" asked Teenie.

"Why, dear, because it will be more easily seen."

Even Leona saw a ray of hope in the plan, and entered into it with great spirit. All that day and all the next the two young men, with Leona, and sometimes Antonio, sat writing the tiny messages, and sealing them up ready for the little *voyageurs*.

The worst of it was that these would choose their own time of departure, but it was considered that as spring was not far off, instinct would cause them to hie away home to the shores of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

By evening tide on the third day they had nearly three hundred quills loaded and sealed and ready for their bearers.

How to catch the birds would have been a puzzle to many; but our young heroes had been instructed by Antonio long ago, and the plan adopted was as simple as it was effective.

A piece of board with a long loose string attached to it was thrown about thirty yards astern of the

ship, the bird catcher abaft the binnacle holding the end of the line in his hand. Then morsels of food were thrown down between the floating board and the ship.

The gulls have eyes like eagles, and they soon came swooping around tack and half-tack. Suddenly the line would be slackened, and almost to a certainty a bird would get entangled by the wings. He was drawn gently on board. If a foreign bird, he was immediately thrown into the air; if a British, he was allowed to run about the deck, for curiously enough they were unable to raise themselves on their wings, owing to the motion perhaps, which invariably made them sea-sick.

When about a dozen were captured, then one by one they were taken in hand and had a quill attached to them, then thrown up into the air.

Teenie never failed to kiss each bird on the poll, and sent all sorts of kind messages to her daddy and mammy, and they were to be sure to fly straight to Fisherton and deliver their letters.

But I feel certain that the prayers of every one on board went with those bonnie birds.

It is strange but true, that the gulls that had once been caught never returned to the *Zingara* again.

In less than two weeks no fewer than four hundred messages had been sent off.

"Surely," thought our heroes, "one will be found."

But Antonio when appealed to only answered—

“If it is God’s will, dearie, your plan will be successful.”

The open water near to which the *Zingara* was anchored on the sandbank, or rather bank of clay, was the constant resort of birds of every description, and strange fishes too. More than one whale with calves had come to bask in the sunshine here, and sharks were very common.

Shoals of porpoises too would suddenly appear, splashing and dashing, and making the water boil with the motion their gambols excited. They even emitted a kind of cooing sound, but finally they disappeared as suddenly as they had come.

Barclay, with the weed-cutting boat, had forced his way into this strange open lake several times, and marvelled to find that the water was at least ten degrees warmer in the centre than it was around the ship. He marvelled more one day when all around him, right in the midst of the lake, the water began to bubble. At the same time deep submarine muffled thunders could be heard, and a strong sulphureous gas filled all the air around.

This spot had, no doubt, been at one time an oceanic volcano, and it might burst out at any time.

One day while fishing with deep-sea lines in this open lake, Barclay saw the balloon slowly ascend from the ship, with Antonio alone on board.

It passed over the boat, and the captain waved

his handkerchief and looked down. He was answered by a heartfelt lusty cheer, for there was not a man now in the boat who did not love and revere their weird wee captain.

Barclay continued to fish, while Teenie, who seemed to be in a peculiarly happy frame of mind to-day, lolled back among the cushions, and sung sweet little songs to the crew, accompanying herself on the mandoline.

This was certainly idyllic, and the day was glorious. Not too hot either, for fleecy little cloudlets shaded them from the fiercer rays of sunshine.

Barclay was on good terms with himself, for he had hauled in some lordly cod and other edible fishes, with which the sea here literally swarmed.

Fishing was continued for at least two hours. Teenie had ceased to sing and play, and the mandoline lay quietly on her breast, while with head thrown back and rosy parted lips, she had fallen fast asleep.

A beautiful child never looks more beautiful than in the innocence of healthful slumber.

Barclay was looking at her, and he suddenly made a discovery. It was this: he loved this little fisher lass. Only a boy's love, we may grant, but it had raised a heaven in his heart that never was there before.

He could not help wondering to himself if, when older, she would retain her soft and marvellous beauty, and if she would continue to love him as he

knew she did now. I cannot explain this, but tell you for a fact, that Barclay would rather have died with Teenie now, than live to see her grow up and, mayhap, confer her affections on another.

And still gazing on her, but turning his thoughts inwards, this strange boy began to pray. I wish every boy who reads my stories were like him, for he went to the Father with every trouble he had, no matter how trivial, and he never left without a feeling of hope and comfort.

To-day Barclay was still deep in thought, and the men were lying on their oars simply waiting for orders, when suddenly there came a bolt from the blue, as it were. High up in the air a shot seemed to have been fired that shook even the boat. One startled glance upwards revealed the terrible fact that the balloon had burst in mid air, and was all in rags and tatters, while with inconceivable swiftness downwards rushed the basket, with Antonio clinging to it.

The balloon must have been fully 1500 feet high in air when it burst, and it seemed that nothing could save poor Antonio.

No wonder that the men's gaze was riveted to the swift-descending wreck.

Barclay clutched the side of the boat and held his breath as if spell-bound, while a strange kind of sickness, born perhaps of this new terror, came creeping over his heart.

Teenie had awoke, and was weeping low to herself.

For just a moment Barclay thought he was about to faint.

But when at last the wreck struck the sea with a sounding thud, all feeling of fear and sickness was banished as if by magic.

“Give way, lads; give way,” he cried. “We may at least save the body of our captain from the sharks.”

The men gave way with a will.

The wreck of the balloon had fallen within seventy yards of them.

It was a race between the boat and the horrid *Squalidæ* (sharks of different kinds) that infested the warm lake.

Antonio’s body was floating on its back, and he looked peaceful and asleep.

It was saved only just in time.

One of the black men brought the whole weight of a cannibal’s battle-axe club and his own immense strength to bear upon a hammer-headed shark that had sprung from the depths to seize what he took for his lawful prize, and next moment the hideous creature floated dead on the surface of the water.

CHAPTER VIII

STRANGE ADVENTURES—SECRETS OF THE SEA

BARCLAY was not much of a doctor, but he spread cushions in the bottom of the boat and laid the body of the poor captain flat thereon, while Teenie knelt down beside it and gave way to floods of anguish.

It was heartrending to witness her grief and her lamentations.

“O 'Tonio, poor dear 'Tonio. He is dead. He is killed and deaded. He will never sing and play again. O 'Tonio, 'Tonio. Hands so cold too, and brow and face. He will never, never open his eyes no more. O 'Tonio, my Tonio!”

Barclay could detect no pulse at the wrist, but thought he felt a little flickering at the heart.

The men worked like slaves to get the boat through the tangled weeds, and at length they found themselves alongside the *Zingara*, and their burden, all so quiet and still, was hoisted on board.

A cot was swung on the quarter-deck, and an awning spread above. In this Antonio was laid and covered with rugs.

At Sister Leona's request there were jars of hot water placed at the feet and both sides of the chest.

In half-an-hour she nodded and smiled to Barclay, and the boy knew there was hope. The pulse had begun to beat once more, though feebly, and the breathing was perceptible, but very feeble.

Even Teenie dried her eyes now.

"Keep the ship as quiet as possible," whispered Leona. "Everything now depends on sleep."

"And you do not think he will die?"

"Quite the contrary; though it is a case of brain concussion, it is slight, and I can give you the assurance that all will be well in a week."

Two hours afterwards Antonio, to the delight of his watchers, opened his eyes and began to speak feebly. He evidently did not know where he was, however, or what had occurred.

He held out a feeble hand to Davie.

"O José, José, my own, my best of brothers," he said, "to see you once again, dearie! But how white your hair is, and how wan your face. Ah! won't mother be glad to meet us again. '*Carissima*' we used to call her, José, and '*Carissimu*' she still shall be."

But now Sister Leona laid a finger on his lips.

This recalled him somewhat from his wanderings.

"Drink this and sleep," she said.

He did as told, and presently went off again into a dreamless sleep, without either twitching or movement of a muscle.

After concussion of the brain there is sometimes fierce reaction.

In Antonio's case there was none.

After severe concussion, the patient is seldom, if ever, the same man again. But to draw to a conclusion this story of Antonio's accident, the captain was his old self again in two weeks' time, and in three weeks his lady doctor, Sister Leona, permitted him once more to play and sing.

The weed patches in this Sea of Sargasso are constantly shifting, except in the very centre, where the gulf-weeds are packed and piled in such masses, that no earthly power could ever force a passage through them.

Here, too, they probably fill the sea to its bottom, and packed thus, will in all probability become in time great coal islands, that may supply fuel for future generations.

Barclay had resumed his explorations far in through the weedy ocean. Sometimes he found a lane of water leading in a tortuous manner through the dark brown meadows. Then if a little breeze was blowing favourable for return as well as advance, a sail would be set, and explorations carried further over the ocean of weeds. But he did not forget that at any moment these canals might close up behind him, and render his passage back to the ship difficult, if not impossible.

He invariably took little Teenie with him on his expeditions.

Indeed, to tell the truth, little Teenie was just a wee bit self-willed, and refused to be left behind.

I could not name to you half the strange things—

flotsam and jetsam—that Barclay found during his daring explorations. There were casks innumerable, the remains of boats and derelicts, that soon must sink owing to the load of shell-fish and lime-deposit attached to them; trees uncountable; boxes also, and once a bottle. This was found floating in a lane of water, intact, for its cork was closely sealed, and the top wrapped round with canvas. It was, moreover, encased with several bands of tarry rope, destined, no doubt, to act as buffers against the rocks.

These buffers were covered with no deposit, nor did any shells adhere to them; even bivalves will not cling to a tarry substance.

Barclay could not wait till he got on board, but broke the bottle open. Strange, indeed, was the document enclosed, and it proved that the bottle must have floated about for thirty years and over.

Yes, strange and sad was the missive.

“H.M.S. GUN-BRIG ‘TARTAR,’

“*August 21st, 1810. Lat. 30° N., long. 43° W.*”

“On fire. Nothing can save us. All boats destroyed. Sinking fast. We commend our souls——”

The message broke off abruptly here. There had been no more time. The brave fellows had thrown the bottle into the sea, and now—

“The billow mournful rolls,
And the mermaid’s song condoles,
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave.”

On a heaped-up bank of seaweed one day Barclay found quite a quantity of birds' nests, those of a large species of gull, plentiful enough in this Sea of Sargasso.

He felt a little compunction in taking them away, but it seemed a necessity, although Barclay was certainly not one of those self-conceited saints who believe that every creature and thing in this world was made for man's use. Says some poet—Pope, I think, though I cannot be sure, for a man's memory plays him queer tricks at times, and causes him, in cold blood, to murder the best of quotations—

“ ‘All things on earth were made for mankind's use,’
‘And man for mine,’ replied the pampered goose.”

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One night, however, Barclay got belated, and finding he could not reach the *Zingara* that night, determined to lie where he was.

The sun had gone down so suddenly, that though the ship was but five miles off, and they could see her great lantern a-swing at the masthead, they would not dare to fight the weeds at night.

But Barclay's plan suited romantic wee Teenie very much indeed.

She clapped her hands first with delight, then growing serious all of a sudden, she put her hand on Barclay's arm, and leaning confidently towards him—

“Of course,” she asked, “no wobbley-wobbley beasts will come up to kill us?”

“You are perfectly safe, Teenie dear.”

"Well," she added, "I'll say my prayers and make sure."

Off came every cap, and no one spoke till Teenie got up from off her knees and once more seated herself among the cushions.

It was an ideal tropical night. The stars were all out, and shining with ineffable clearness. A gentle breeze blew over the great brown sea in a kind of gentle whisper, and far away on the western horizon great white clouds had banked up, behind which the summer lightning or "fire flaughts" played incessantly.

For a long time Barclay and Teenie sat side by side talking low together about the dear old times, as the child called them, and all their fishing adventures and wild escapades in the woods and on the hills and moors.

But she heaved a deep sigh at last.

"Oh dear me!" she said, "I suppose all these happy days will never return."

"They may, little pet."

"Well," said Teenie, "Sister Leona prays every night, and I'm just going to do the same. She says God is sure to hear us some day. Do you think, Barclay, that God ever comes to this ugly brown sea?"

"Oh yes; all the beautiful birds are His, and we are all His, and He loves us."

"Ah!" she cried, "of course the birds are His, but not the ugly sharks. They belong to the bad man. Oh, *I* know nicely they do."

“And now, Teenie, are you not going to tune your mandoline and sing a little to us?”

“Yes, do, missie,” said one of the men, reloading his pipe.

Simple little songs they were, sweet and clear; many were lullabies, that almost sent the men to sleep.

But bedtime came at last. A sentry was set, and the men lay down.

Barclay tucked Teenie up on the after-seat of the boat, bade her good-night, kissed her by order, then curled up himself at the bottom of the boat.

Nor did he or she awake until the sun glared red across the Sargasso Sea, encrimsoning even the dark brown weedy billows—a scene of such beauty, that it could not be depicted even by the aid of the best of magic-lanterns.

Teenie awoke happy and smiling, and looked down at Barclay.

“Poor boy!” she said, “all alone all the long, long night.”

He drew water for her in a pannikin, and she performed a little salt-water toilet, such as the mermaids do. Barclay followed suit, and both felt refreshed.

Then a fire of wood was made on an iron plate in the bottom of the boat, and fish were fried and coffee made.

Barclay never went away on an ocean picnic of this kind without taking every necessary of camp-life with him, so no wonder Teenie delighted to accompany him.

All felt like giants refreshed now, and the battle with the weeds was recommenced.

In less than three hours they were safe alongside the *Zingara*.

But something strange was soon going to happen, though they could not yet tell what it might be.

Anyhow, the glass fell lower than ever it had done since they entered the Sea of Sargasso.

That night the centre of the lake appeared wonderfully agitated, and a dark cloud lay close over it.

The wind—quite a breeze for this great ocean backwater—was blowing from the ship towards the submarine volcano—for it was nothing less—so that those on board the *Zingara* were but little inconvenienced by sulphureous fumes.

But all night long the lightning played incessantly in the dark cloud that hovered over the ocean-covered crater, and low muttering thunder was heard, while every now and then the ship was shaken fore and aft.

With the single exception perhaps of Teenie herself, no one lay down to sleep till far into the short hours of morning. But tired and weary now, our heroes stretched themselves on deck at last, and were soon forgetful of all around them.

Day was breaking when they awoke and staggered to their feet.

Their first glances were turned towards the submarine volcano.

All was peaceful and still.

The dark cloud was there no longer.

The breeze itself had almost died away, but a heavy swell, greater than any they had yet experienced, was rolling in from the far-off blue sea, which told them plainly that a violent storm or tornado must have been raging in the south.

The ship rose and fell and rolled, and the disagreeable motion altogether reminded them of the doldrums of the equator.

Wonders really never cease on this mysterious sea.

Barclay went to the masthead, nay, he even shinned up to the very truck itself to look around him.

The discoveries he made were interesting.

First and foremost, the lake of open and weedless water had increased to double its size; secondly, the derelict "ship of the dead," which they had formerly visited, had drifted much nearer to them; thirdly, a broad lane of water stretched from the open sea as far as eye could reach into the ocean of weeds to the west; last and not least, adown this canal, borne along by the light wind, and wheeling round and round in the current, was another derelict.

"Still another secret of the sea," said Barclay.

"True," replied Davie Drake; adding, "Do you remember Longfellow's poem? how

". . . the Count Arnoldos
With his hawk upon his hand,
Saw a fair and stately galley
Steering onwards to the land ;—

How he heard the ancient helmsman
Chant a song so wild and clear,
That the sailing sea-bird slowly
Poised upon the mast to hear,

Till his soul was full of longing,
And he cried, with impulse strong,
‘ Helmsman ! for the love of Heaven,
Teach me, too, that wondrous song ! ’

‘ Wouldst thou,’ so the helmsman answered,
‘ Learn the secret of the sea ?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery.’ ”

CHAPTER IX

AT THE DERELICT AGAIN

"THERE is no current here," said Antonio to the mate. "If so, it is all but imperceptible, so it is the light breeze alone that is carrying that derelict along."

"Look at the birds around her, sir. Why, they are in thousands and thousands."

"Well, I propose that we board her. Call away the weed-plough, and get the man to put a rope-ladder on board."

In two hours' time they found themselves in the volcanic lake, and soon had entered the lane or canal adown which the derelict came slowly floating along.

"Give way, men, with a will," cried Barclay, who was in command, Antonio having stayed in the ship. "Give way, lads; the exercise will put life in you."

It made them perspire at all events, for the day was sultry and hot.

The derelict which they reached at last was a strange sight, draped all round with weeds slimy and grey.

But the hook-end of the rope-ladder was pitched on board, and caught on.

The men held it till Barclay clambered up to the top of the bulwark.

He stood there for a moment holding on to a portion of the slimy rigging which still remained, for indeed a wondrous sight lay before him on the deck below.

The whole of it was covered with the nests of sea-birds, built chiefly with dried seaweed, and lined with *rags*. These rags told a tale—they were undoubtedly the tattered remains of dead men's clothes, and must have been torn from the bodies of sailors that lay dead in derelicts not so ancient as this. Some of the rags were red, others blue.

But every nest was filled with beautiful eggs. Blue or green they were, and prettily streaked and blotched with black.

Save the birds—and they were in myriads, their screaming and noise being deafening—there was no living creature on board. Shells of molluscs, bivalves, and small crabs, however, lay about plentifully, and even the bones of fishes, nor was the odour that rose from the deck at all captivating to the nasal organs.

It is always sad, and at most times sinful, to harry or rob the nests of birds, but in this case Barclay considered it a case of necessity, so with but few scruples of conscience the boat was loaded with eggs.

There were one or two skeletons on the deck, the green bones of which told a sad tale of suffering.



Inside the ribs birds had built their nests. Down below there was absolutely nothing to give a clue to the name of the ship or to elucidate the mystery. When told of this, Antonio believed that she had been hurriedly deserted at sea, and afterwards had floated into the Sargasso Sea; that the men who had died on board had probably been sick, and thus were left behind to die in lonesome misery.

The eggs were put in salt, and formed an excellent and wholesome addition to the now waning contents of the larder.

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When morning at length broke red across the brown sea, it was found that something strange had happened during the night, for there were no signs of the derelict, and all the birds had dispersed.

“No doubt,” said Antonio to Barclay, “the shaking of the ship by your men trampling about as they gathered the eggs had opened an old leak, kept shut before, perhaps, by weeds, and a rotten plank or two. She would then rapidly go down and sink.”

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A time came at last when death seemed but a measurable distance off—death by starvation.

Already Antonio had found it necessary to place all hands on a diminished allowance with the exception of Teenie and Sister Leona, though the latter could scarcely be prevailed upon to acquiesce in the arrangement.

“Ah, but, dear sister,” said Antonio, “our men

may soon fall sick. We depend upon *you* to nurse them. You must not let yourself sink."

The coals were nearly all used up by this time.

There was still arrowroot left, biscuits, the eggs, and some tinned meat, but nothing else, with the exception of preserved coffee, sugar, and tea, and a few pieces of pork.

I must except tobacco, however. Old hardy sailors, reader, may smoke, but the weed invariably weakens the hearts of boys who use it.

Food was eked out now with everything it was possible to get of an edible kind. Fish were caught daily; sometimes more than could be used, for scarcely would they retain their freshness for four hours.

Seaweed was considered a delicacy both fore and aft. So too were the succulent little brown crabs and different species of molluscs. Many of the latter were eaten raw to save fire.

For on fire their very lives depended. Without it water could not be condensed.

With Archie and our younger heroes, the captain one day went round the ship below and above.

"You see, lads," he said, "the coals won't last a very long time, and water we must have."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I think with economy we may be able to live six months longer."

"Oh, sir, the coals won't last six weeks."

"True, mate, true, but we'll burn the bulkheads

and every timber or spar below we can spare, though we make a shell of the ship."

"Won't there be danger of her floating too lightly then and rolling under?"

"No, I shall look out for that. I shall load up with sand ballast dredged from below."

"Well thought of!"

"Ah, lad! danger and misadventure make one wondrous wise."

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For the first time since their imprisonment the great diving lift was swung overboard, and Barclay, who, it must be owned, was chief favourite with Antonio, descended in it to the sea's dark depths.

These dark depths, however, were speedily illuminated by electric light.

Not only so, but a flash-light was turned on, and directed through the great glass window away into the blackness of darkness beyond. The effect was magical.

Not only could they see the sandy bottom clearly, and make out that it was covered *white* with the débris of shells that had sunk from aloft, but the strange light attracted towards it small fishes in shoals, of every conceivable kind or class.

Not only these, but huge sharks and zygænas, or hammer-headed sharks. They came close against the glass, and might have smashed it had not Antonio been prepared to repel these ungainly and terrible would-be boarders. He had placed sharp strong wires

near the sides, and when a shark came too near he touched a button, and though the shock was not enough to kill, it was sufficient to make the monsters fly.

They stopped down for a whole hour on the first day to study natural history.

But on the second day they saw a strange sight under the rays of the great flash-light; several enormous sharks were about, and one received a shock.

Unable to imagine what had hurt him, instead of darting away off into the darkness, he turned with all the fury of a tiger on another shark near him.

The combat raged for a quarter of an hour, and was fearful in the extreme, though but dimly seen by those in the lift, owing to the combatants having stirred up the bottom.

This murkiness cleared away at last, and then one of the sharks could be seen lying dead at the bottom of the sea.

The lift was hoisted up.

"Pity we couldn't get the dead shark, sir," said Barclay musingly.

"We have only got to wait a few hours and watch; as gases form in the dead monster, he will float to the surface."

And this was precisely what occurred.

A boat was lowered and the liver secured. The amount of oil extracted was enormous, and would serve as fuel. It was carefully bottled, as a sailor called it, in an air-tight tank.

But many more sharks were taken in the following way.

The lift was lowered, and the flash-light turned on. Then after giving time for these operations, hooks baited with pieces of pork were lowered.

These were almost immediately seized by some powerful tiger of the sea, and soon after he was drawn up, and in-board.

The struggles of such monsters as these were fearful to witness; the snap-snapping of the jaws, and the lashing of the tail, were things to see and hear and remember for ever and a day.

One of the blacks, however, usually settled the business with his battle-axe or cannibal club.

Then the shark was opened, and the liver extracted.

But this was not all, for shark is good to eat, though I never cared much for it myself.

Many sharks were thus caught. And so too were gigantic conger eels, that really looked like sea-serpents. Cod also, and halibut. So that on the whole, Antonio found now he could once more put the crew on full allowance.

But living on fish and seaweed, without bread or vegetables, Antonio knew, would not do for any lengthened period.

Indeed, in about a month's time several of the hands began to sicken, and one night poor seaman Hodder died somewhat suddenly.

He had been a general favourite with every one on board. His song was always the cheeriest, his laugh

the merriest, and his sad death cast a gloom over all the ship.

But when two other men died in spite of Sister Leona's nursing and attention, things began to look serious.

Antonio blamed the shark diet, and gave orders that no more should be used.

Then Barclay in his weed-plough went in search of succulent weeds. He brought on board a quantity of delicious dulse, and small oysters that he had found clinging to the roots of the seaweed stalks.

And so the plague was stayed—for a time at all events.

They had now sufficient oil to act as fuel for months.

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But the men began to get languid and lethargic again, always the first symptoms of that ocean scourge, the scurvy.

"Well, sister, can you account for it?" asked Antonio.

"It is want of work that makes the blood stagnant," said Leona.

Antonio considered for a short time.

"What can we give them to do?" he remarked at last.

"Oh," cried Barclay Stuart, "I know."

"Well, dearie, let us hear your scheme. Quite a boy's one, no doubt."

Barelay smiled, and coloured a little.

"Anyhow," he said boldly, "boy or not boy, here it goes."

"The derelict, you know, that we first boarded is now much nearer to us, isn't it?"

"Granted, dearie."

"Well, those spars or lower masts of hers are as strong and good as ever."

"True."

"Then my plan is, to unship them and haul them on board here. They will do excellently well for main and mizen jury-masts, with fore and aft sails on them——"

Antonio would not let him say another word.

"Bravo!" he cried; "shake hands, my boy. You're cleverer far than your stupid old captain, who never even thought of that. It shall be done.

"Heigh-ho! though," he added, "it may be of little use in the long run; but if Heaven in its mercy would but send a gale and open up this terrible sea of weeds, then with our jury-masts and try-sails we might float away and get free."

"Well, sir, I have hopes anyhow. Mind, the birds, you know, must be home long, long before now."

.

The very next day not one but two boats forced their way after terrible exertions to the derelict, and the work was commenced.

She had been a taller ship, this derelict, than the

Zingara — much, so it was found that her masts cut from the main deck would be high enough to form jury-masts for the *Zingara*.

The work, however, was indeed hard and difficult in the extreme.

But from the very day the men began it, all signs of sickness departed.

Sister Leona was wise. It was the towing of the spars towards the *Zingara* through the awful tangle of weeds that was the most difficult task, and, indeed, two whole weeks passed by before the masts were fairly hoisted on board.

Then the work of stepping them commenced. At this every one on board worked with a will—excepting, of course, Teenie and Sister Leona, but even they assisted with their cheerful talk and encouraging smiles.

Pandoo proved almost as strong as either of the black men, and poor Johnnie Smart did his best, although bathed in perspiration. When fairly beaten out, Johnnie would sink on the deck, wipe his steaming face, and—just laugh.

This laugh of his, so droll and silent, never failed to make everybody else laugh.

“Down again, Johnnie?” a man would say.

“Down again,” Johnnie would reply, with his head in the air, and no more eye visible than a piggie’s.

But the work went merrily on, and in time the masts were stepped.

Then the rigging had to be got off the derelict, another difficult task.

This was shipped at last. Spars were now formed and fitted as booms.

Then sails had to be made and bent. Luckily there was a good deal of canvas on board, besides spare ropes and sheets, so that the sails were not long in being completed.

The *Zingara* now looked wonderfully well, and Antonio took a delight in getting everything into good working order. Although there was no need to do so, he exercised the men every day at setting and taking in sails.

This, at all events, had the effect of keeping the crew active, and holding sickness at bay.

But the weeds and shells had once more got the upper hand, and had taken entire possession of the water-line and a band of the hull some three feet wide. Below this all was copper, and to this only some mussels clung.

Well, a party with instruments not unlike strong Dutch hoes was now lowered daily to clear the parasite weeds and shells away.

An accident that this work led to was probably one of the saddest that had yet occurred.

CHAPTER X

“SAYS GRANNIE, ‘JOHNNIE,’ SHE SAYS, ‘YOU’RE GOIN’ HOME’”

THE very innocence of the fat boy, Johnnie Smart, had endeared him to all. His great affection for Teenie too, for whom I believe he would have at any time laid down his life, was quite a feature in his character.

Then his well-pleased fat face and curious smile or laugh made everybody feel on good terms with him. Even when he made a mistake of any kind in his capacity of cook’s mate or Pandoo’s assistant, it only made him laugh, and no one could be angry with him.

One morning he approached Teenie, who was sitting near the binnacle engrossed in “Tom Cringle’s Log.” He was looking more serious than usual.

He bobbed and bowed and blushed, and spoke at last.

“Miss Teenie,” he said, “I had a kind o’ a dream last night, which ’twere more o’ a wision like nor a dream——”

“Well, Johnnie?”

“Well, Miss Teenie, I seed my old grannie like ’s

plain ’s I see you afore me just now, and she says, ‘Johnnie,’ says she, ‘you’re goin’ home,’ and wi’ that the old lady just wanished, and I woked.”

He seemed so woe-begone, that Teenie could not help saying—

“Ah! but you know, Johnnie, dreams go by contraries.”

“Goes by contrairies, does ’ey now, missie? Well, the old lady never was that way. No, Miss Teenie, summat’s gone to ’appen. We’ll see.”

And off walked Johnnie, sighing.

If dreams ever come true in any way, it depends, I believe, on mere coincidence. But this is strange enough sometimes to make people put faith in them.

Johnnie was soon after busily engaged with the rest of the squad clearing off the weeds and shells from the ship’s sides. They were slung overboard on the bights of ropes, in which they sat with their legs dangling down.

They were all working away right merrily, and Johnnie was perhaps the merriest of the lot.

He had almost forgotten his dream. He only once alluded to it, and that was to say—

“Well, maties, this all looks as if we would soon get clear and sail away for furrin counterees, which my grannie did say in my dream. Says she, ‘Johnnie,’ she says, ‘you’re goin’ home, you is.’”

“La!” said one sailor, “I’ve most forgotten wot home’s like.”

“But,” said another, “if ever we does get back

to Britain's shore, won't we let ourselves spread, Bill, eh?"

"That will we, Jim, and not a little bit either. Ye can bet your 'at on that. And I say, Jim, wot cher think? I——"

He never finished his sentence, for a piercing shriek from Johnnie, who was next to him, drew attention to the poor lad. His rope had slackened, and he swung with his feet almost touching the water.

Bill Carry seized him just in time, and shouted for help from above.

Both he and the poor fat boy were almost immediately drawn up.

The blood was flowing like a fountain from Johnnie's leg, which a shark had snapped off close above the knee.

Sister Leona came up, and with Antonio's assistance quickly applied a tourniquet, and the bleeding was partially stopped.

Johnnie had fainted, and during the time he lay thus insensible, Sister Leona dressed the stump as neatly as a surgeon could have done.

It was not until after the unfortunate lad had been placed in a cot beneath the awning that he recovered semi-consciousness.

But wild, hot fever set in that night, and all throughout the long dark hours he raved and talked of home, of his sister, his mother, and grannie.

He seemed to doze off about daybreak, and slept heavily off and on till nearly sunset.

Poor Teenie hardly ever moved away from his side, moistening his lips with water, and keeping wet the cloth that had been laid upon his brow.

Sister Leona had entertained but little hopes of him from the beginning, but had not calculated upon the end being so close at hand.

It was nearing the brief gloaming that follows sunset in these latitudes when he opened his eyes.

“Are you better, dear Johnnie?”

“Which I’ll be better prisintly, dear Teenie,” was the reply.

“Which I’s a-goin’ home fast, missie.”

Teenie began to cry.

“Don’t ee, don’t ee,” said the poor boy faintly.

“It allus did make me feel queer like to see you cry, Teenie.”

“Johnnie, Johnnie, oh say you will not die.”

“Which death—comes—to us all,” he gasped.

He lay perfectly still for a minute, and Teenie put a little cordial to his lips.

“Say, Teenie?”

“Yes, Johnnie.”

“Ye won’t take on muchly, will ye?”

Teenie tried hard not to cry.

“There be a long letter in my ditty-box for them at ’ome. ’Taint finished. Teenie, you’ll finish her, and if ever ye gets away home to England’s shore, give this silver ring to Sissie.”

“Shall I run below, Johnnie, and bring Sister Leona? She may be——”

"No, no, no, Teenie. I wants nobbut you. Give me your hand like.

"I'm happy now," he added.

Teenie spoke not.

She was awed into silence, for in the waning light she could see a change spread over the poor boy's face.

He just held back his head, his face to the sky, and smiled in the old droll way, then——

When Leona came up a few minutes later she found Teenie sitting there, her face buried in the coverlet, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

She still held Johnnie's hand.

But Johnnie had gone home.

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Of all the burials that had taken place at sea, that of Johnnie Smart was the saddest by far.

As Sister Leona read the service, I am sure there was not a dry eye in the group abaft the binnacle, while both Teenie and Pandoo sobbed aloud.

But it was over at last.

The men were dismissed to their work, and Johnnie Smart, innocent, unselfish lad, will be seen no more, until that day

"When the sea gives up its dead."

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Captain Antonio Garcia kept all hands steadily at work now, and even for Teenie he found something to do.

In a few weeks’ time he was pleased to note that although Johnnie never could be forgotten, the men, and even Teenie, talked about him as not dead, but gone before, and in a far happier place now than any on board the seemingly doomed ship *Zingara*.

CHAPTER XI

*“WHERE CAN MEN DIE BETTER THAN IN FACING
FEARFUL ODDS?”*

ANTONIO determined to make one more, one last ascent in the balloon; for things were now getting desperate indeed, and once again it appeared as if scurvy was about to break out among his crew.

So the balloon was repaired, almost rebuilt indeed, and finally it ascended. But this time the wise wee captain had provided himself with a parachute, and he wore also a lifebelt.

Well indeed was it that he had taken these precautions, for a man falling into the Sargasso Sea, were he the strongest swimmer who ever shot arms out, could not save his life, if he once became entangled among the long snaky weeds.

The balloon rose well, and Antonio turned his telescope anxiously seaward.

Joy of joys! he saw a ship, a great ocean steamer, homeward bound. He could see the men and officers on deck clearly enough, for the open water was only about thirty miles away now.

They evidently saw him, for when he waved his coat they responded. They even dipped their ensign.

What they took him for may never be known.

It is but charitable to believe that the captain of the unknown steamer did not even know that the aeronaut was in need of assistance. Be this as it may, she steamed off and away, and made no more sign.

It was very sad, and Antonio's hopes now sank to zero.

As he was just about to make the signal for descent, the balloon burst with a loud report.

The captain at once precipitated himself into space, holding fast to the parachute.

The boat, under the command of the third mate, Davie Drake, had been pushed through the weeds into the volcanic lake, and the men were lying on their oars listlessly when they heard the explosion.

They paid no attention to the wreck; all eyes were riveted on the now slowly descending Antonio.

“Give way, lads, now,” shouted Davie. “Let us get right beneath, for the sharks are in shoals.”

And so well did they manage it, that the captain alighted right amongst the men.

Had he fallen into the sea to-day, his life would not have been worth a minute's purchase.

Antonio was smiling.

“Here's a wind-up to a windy day,” he said.

“Indeed, sir,” said Davie, “you seem to bear a charmed life.”

“Pull right away for the basket and wrecked balloon, boys,” he made answer. “My telescope and

other instruments are in it, and I wouldn't lose them for a good deal."

"Give way again, boys," shouted Davie, and very soon they reached the wreckage.

To Antonio's joy the basket had not capsized, so everything was saved.

"And now on board we go," cried the captain. "I have joyful news for you and for us all, men.

"If my plan is adopted, I think we will even yet get clear."

"Hurrah!" shouted the stroke oar. "Up with her, lads. Cheerily does it. Doesn't it, sir?"

"Ay, boy, and cheerily always did do it. Mind what Shakespeare says, mate?

"Jog on, jog on the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile-a ;
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.'"

Antonio said little more until he got on board, nor even then till dinner was finished and they were all gathered cosily together on deck, with the sun sinking low in the west.

"We are all anxious to hear what you have to say, sir," said Davie Drake.

"Well, it is this—

"Where can men die better
Than in facing fearful odds?"

I'll explain. I feel, then, that if scurvy attacks us

again we will drop off one by one like sickly sheep. If we work, it will help to keep the enemy at bay."

"True, sir, true," said Sister Leona. "We are commanded to work and pray."

"Well, from my observations to-day before the balloon unfortunately burst, I find we are but little more than thirty miles from the sea. I mean to try to reeve the ship through into the blue water. If we drop, we shall die. True, but it is death anyhow, and perhaps Providence will sustain us."

Teenie was looking at him with wide open eyes and parted lips.

She was too young to fear death, but she was filled with hope.

She went and threw her arms round Antonio's neck.

"Oh, good, good 'Tonio," she cried, "you'll take us home, won't you?"

"I'll try, dearie, I'll try."

"Can Sister Leona and I help?" she asked.

"Ahem! Oh yes, you can. We will work, and you shall pray.

"A fair division of labour, isn't it, Archie?"

"Yes, sir.

"But," he added, "for the life of me, I don't yet see how it is to be done."

"Wait then till to-morrow's sun shines o'er the sea," answered Antonio, nodding and smiling.

The news that an attempt was now to be made

to gain the open water soon spread among the crew, and even those who had begun to ail seemed to regain strength and spirits.

There is indeed no medicine in the world so efficacious as hope.

Every one on board the *Zingara* slept sounder than usual that night, and more than one dreamt ere morning that the ship was once more far away from this mysterious and echoless sea, ploughing her way through the blue ocean, all sails set, and homeward bound.

CHAPTER XII

*"NO HELP! NO HOPE! AND DAY AFTER DAY
FLEW BY"*

EARLY next morning Antonio commenced putting his plan into execution.

The work would be long and tedious, probably it would be an entire failure. Yet somehow or other he had hope.

He called all hands together and addressed them briefly.

"It seems to me," he said, "boys, that the sand-bank on which we lie extends almost directly south far beyond this Sea of Sargasso, in which we have been Crusoes so long. The soundings that I and my young officer here, Mr. Stuart, have taken, appear to confirm me in that idea. Well, deep water would frustrate my plans, so we must trust we shall keep on the bank.

"Luckily," he continued, "we have a tremendous length of hawser or hawsers on board. Some of these will need splicing. This must be done at once. So away with you, lads, and do this work, and reeve a small anchor to one end of it, attaching the other to the windlass, and then we shall see what we shall see."

The men worked with such a will, that before noon all was ready.

Then the anchor end of the hawser was loaded into the weed-plough boat, which being well manned, began at once to forge its way through the weeds directly south.

Meanwhile the main anchor was got up.

The hawser was paid out almost to the end. Then Antonio hailed the boat through his speaking-trumpet.

“Let go the hawser anchor.”

For just a moment hope trembled in the balance.

But, oh joy! as the men on board bent on to the winch and turned it round, it was found that the anchor end held fast, and the ship herself began to move slowly seawards.

Round and round went the winch, and in came the hawser.

Men were stationed over the bows at each side, armed with long poles, to help to thrust aside the weeds. And this aided the ship's progress considerably.

Unfortunately there was not a breath of wind, else the work would have gone on more quickly.

As it was, there was little to complain of, and as soon as the hawser anchor was got up, it was once more shipped on board the weed-plough and carried off again.

And so the work went on slowly but surely till darkening.

Then the main anchor was once more let go, and the boat hauled up for the night. They had advanced two whole miles that afternoon, so no wonder their spirits rose.

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For the first time since the sad death of poor Johnnie Smart, Antonio brought out his guitar to-night to play and sing.

We cannot blame him. We never can forget the dear dead ones, although soundly do they sleep, their joys and sorrows past.

Then have we not the hope of a glorious resurrection? We can harbour no doubt on this score; for to Him who made and rules the mist of stars, and suns, and planets we see even by the naked eye every starry night around and above us, surely nothing is impossible. But more marvellous still, perhaps. Our Father governs the infinitely small as well as the infinitely great, and that by laws immutable and unchangeable. Not a midge that, though but one of millions who dance gaily as the setting sun glints over moor or marsh He does not know all about; even the microbes revealed to us by microscopic aid are His creatures, and fulfil His will, making life, or destroying the old to rebuild the new. Yes, it is a mysterious world! But what would it be without hope?

Grief, however, is not healthful, and we may indulge in it even to a sinful extent.

But the songs sung to-night by Antonio were,

though not exactly sad, plaintive, sweet, and tender, and found their way straight to the hearts of his listeners. And when he had finished, Sister Leona, though she had tears in her eyes, thanked him most fervidly.

After he had laid down his instrument, Teenie crept up close to his knee and demanded a story.

And it had to be a fairy one, too.

Antonio told her one with a mermaid in it, a most beautiful mermaid, who dwelt far away in a coralline cave, deep down in the sea's dark bottom. She had little baby mermaids too, and though the sea itself was dark, her cave was lighted up with diamonds and rubies, and studded with pearls, quite a fairy-queen's palace.

"And now, dearie," he said at last, "off you go to your hammock, say your prayers, and dream about all the pretty things I have tried to describe to you."

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The men were at work next day soon after sunrise. Indeed, all hands were piped to breakfast at a little past five o'clock.

It was a long and toilsome day's work, and at the end of it they found they had only done four miles.

But at this rate they would succeed at last, and probably in ten days' time be afloat on the blue sea once more.

Day after day they toiled and toiled. Never before, perhaps, had such hard and tedious work been performed by men who were far from well.

The labour of cutting a ship clear from the main

pack of ice in the Arctic seas is great indeed, but there the weather is cold. Here, on the contrary, the sun's heat almost broiled the poor fellows, and the water served out to them was all but hot.

No wonder that before five days were over three had succumbed to sunstroke, two of whom were dead.

Their deaths caused fear in the hearts of the survivors, for no one knew whose turn might come next.

Antonio and the officers worked as hard, if not harder, than the crew did.

But now came Sabbath, and rest. They were working for dear life itself, it is true, yet Antonio believed that ill-luck would follow, if they did not refrain from work on Sunday.

But Monday morning saw them hard at it again.

And lo ! on the evening of that day, with a delight that was inexpressible, they beheld the blue open water not ten miles away.

In three days more, being still above the sandbank, they found themselves at anchor beyond and clear away from Sargasso, that mysterious and echoless sea.

And now a most difficult task lay before them.

They must unship and repair the rudder. Without this they would but drift like a log once more, and probably be once more engulfed among the terrible weeds.

The rudder, when at last they did manage to unship and hoist it, was found to be more severely damaged than any one had been aware of.

They had to cut timber from the lower deck itself to splice and repair it. But at long, long last they were successful.

But heavy seas, though smooth, were once more rolling in from the south and west, and it was days before they could get the anchor re-shipped.

Was danger all over now?

No, indeed, it was not.

For the backwash of the Atlantic had a tendency to thrust them north again into the Sea of Sargasso, and there was not a breath of wind to aid them in keeping away.

But luckily the sandbank ran far south, and along this they crept by means of hawser and windlass, until they had made good quite a wide offing.

The sandbank ended now, and just at its edge they cast anchor, and determined to wait for the wind, or for assistance from some passing steamer.

No help! no hope! and day after day flew by. They appeared as far from succour as ever.

Hope began once more to fail them, and illness took its place.

Of the whole crew now only nine remained, and of these five were down with scurvy.

O reader, if ever you go to sea, I trust you will never have any experience of that dreariest of all diseases, scurvy. It is but little likely that you will, for never a ship sails now that is not well provided with its prophylactic antidote, lime juice.

I would not harrow any one's feelings with de-

scribing the sufferings of these stricken men, their swollen limbs, their dusky, deathlike countenances, and their sadly sunken eyes.

One of the worst features of these cases was the terrible despondency of the poor fellows.

Sister Leona and Teenie, with Antonio himself, laboured hard among them, but so virulent were the attacks, that one by one all five dropped off.

They were simply sewn in their hammocks and cast overboard.

But dreadful to say, the other four hands of the working crew took ill next, and of these three died.

Then one of the blacks succumbed.

The plague, however, seemed now stayed, but there were hardly officers enough left to work the ship.

The reason, I believe, why none of these had died, is simply to be found in the fact that they kept hard at work all day long. The pores of the skin were therefore well open, and the poison eliminated as fast as it accumulated.

But the wind never came, and for three whole weeks no sail heaved in sight.

Had the anchor been let go, they would have drifted off into deep water, and so have been swirled back towards the echoless sea—never again in life to leave it.

CHAPTER XIII

SO PASSED THE LONG, BRIGHT HOURS AWAY

ONE day Teenie from the foretop—where she spent a great portion of her time with her monkeys and pussy—hailed the quarter-deck.

“’Tonio! O captain, there is a ship in sight.”

It was not long before both Antonio and Barclay were at the masthead.

Yes, indeed, Teenie was right. There she was, just coming over the western horizon. A steamer, too, and that a large and powerful one, though from the fact that her engines were far aft it could be seen that she was a trader, and not a passenger ship.

Nearer and nearer she came, till, even without the aid of a glass, the men could be seen on the deck.

Antonio had hoisted the ensign upside down as a flag of distress, and both he and Barclay waved their jackets from the foretop. Let us be charitable, and say that as there was no wind to float the flag, those on board could not distinguish it as a flag of distress.

But they must have seen that something was

wrong, and the skipper of that trader surely had a heart as hard as flint, to pass on as he did and make no sign. Many and many a ship at sea is thus left to perish, I am sorry to say.

An English ship too, undoubtedly.

"I would not have believed," said Antonio, "that such cruelty could exist in the breast of a British sailor."

Barclay was dumb.

For once in a way he was ashamed of his country.

But Providence proved far more merciful than man, and in a few days' time, to the intense joy of all on board, cats'-paws began to ruffle the heaving billows, and in less than an hour's time a seven-knot breeze was blowing from the west-north-west.

It might not last long it is true, but every inch of canvas was set at once, and the anchor being up, away went the *Zingara*, steering eastward and south for the Canary Islands.

Once clear away from the great ocean of weeds, and all danger seemingly left far behind them, there was joy in every heart.

But, alas! the work was hard, for it was now watch and watch, and hardly even thus was there enough hands to work the ship.

But the fact that the main and mizen sails were fore and aft ones lessened the labour considerably.

The voyage to Teneriffe was a long and a slow one, and on a beam wind most of the way. It was one, however, that few on board the *Zingara* were ever likely to forget.

There was a chastened kind of sorrow in the hearts of all, that found ascendancy sometimes, but for the most part it was joy and hope that came uppermost.

But what a change! Out here on the bright clear waters, soothed by balmy winds, cheered by the warm sunshine, to look back now to that black and dreary weed-pack, the Sea of Sargasso, was like opening a darksome burial vault and gazing into the gloom and night of death.

Long anxiety had told on our heroes, and even on Teenie and Sister Leona, and both the latter were thinner in face than they ought to have been, and had lost something of the bloom that should dwell for ever on the cheeks of childhood or of youth.

But from the very day the Sea of Sargasso was left behind, things took a change for the better. Every one began to regain health and spirits, and each day that dawned took their thoughts farther and farther away from that nightmare dream of two years, spent in the midst of the dreariest sea in the wide, wide world.

Though busily engaged all day, our more intimate heroes, Barclay Stuart and Davie Drake, found time to arrange the hundreds of curios, animal and vegetable,

which they had collected while prisoners in the echoless ocean.

It was Barclay's intention to present those to the British Museum, so he had the fauna labelled, with day and date, and all he knew about them, where and how caught, and their manners and habits of life. With the various kind of weeds he was not less particular, nor with the different kinds of clay and sand that had been dredged up from the bottom.

When all was complete, Barclay was quite proud of his collection.

Although the wind was not all the mariners could have wished, the *Zingara* made fair progress.

Teenie, at all events, was in no hurry to get to Teneriffe. She loved the sea.

The voyage to her was perfectly idyllic.

And so it was to Barclay Stuart also when Teenie—now in her fifteenth year, be it remembered—was sitting or walking by his side.

Everything that could be done *was* done in order to make the ship look smart.

Pandoo and the black man—sole survivor of the four brought from the Coral Isles—with the assistance of the one seaman left, scoured the decks fore and aft, and turning the hose on them, washed them down. Indeed they were washed down every morning, and this was the time for Davie and Barclay to have a bath.

As early as five the hose was rigged and pump and sea-pipe manned. And now the boys went on deck,

shutting the companion behind them to keep everybody else down. Then they stripped, and had the hose turned upon them. Next to a swim in a tropical sea, I know of nothing more exhilarating than a hose-bath of this description.

By eight o'clock the young fellows were dressed and ready for breakfast.

About two days after leaving the tail of the bank, as it was called, they had fallen in with an outward bound trading steamer. Antonio hoisted the flag of distress, and lay-to.

This time the signal was replied to. The steamer stopped ship, and in a few minutes a boat was seen rapidly approaching the *Zingara*.

The officer who held the ribbons was a jolly-looking old man, with cheeks like a full moon orient, and the snowiest of snow-white hair.

"What can I do for you?" was his first kindly query, as he shook Antonio's hand.

"So sorry," began Antonio, "to take up your time——"

"Man! don't mention it," cried the seafarer. "My time is my own. And what is more, the ship yonder—the *Loch Katrine*—is my own, for I'm skipper and owner. I'm sailing from Glasgow to Rio, and farther down.

"I say, though, you've been in awful grief," he added, looking around him. "Jury main and jury mizen, and evidently the work of amateurs. And aren't you undermanned?"

"We have no crew at all save one sailor, that black man, and our good and brave steward Pandoo. All are dead."

"All dead?"

"Yes, sir; we have been imprisoned for two long years in the Sea of Sargasso."

"Bless my soul and body!" cried Captain M'Lean, "and you live to tell me so!"

The rosy-faced skipper's eyes grew bigger, and he stared in silence for at least ten seconds at Antonio, as if he were looking at some of Madame Tussaud's wonderful wax figures.

"Bless my soul and body!" he repeated, "and you actually mean to tell *me* that you escaped at last, and that you really *are* alive?"

"We certainly escaped, and as far as I can tell, we are all alive, though not over-strong yet."

The Glasgow skipper took a seat beneath the awning, lit an enormous cigar, and gave Antonio another.

"Now," he said, "tell me all about your adventures."

Teenie came shyly up at this moment and put her arm round Antonio's neck.

"What a bonnie lassie!" cried the skipper. "Come here, dear, and shake a paw. Why, if I were a hundred years younger I'd make love to you myself."

"Your daughter, Captain Antonio?"

"No, Captain M'Lean. Shall I tell him what you are, dearie?" This last to Teenie herself.

"Oh yes, 'Tonio."

But she blushed bonnily all the same.

"She is just a little stowaway we found in the storeroom two days after sailing, more than four years ago."

"Well, well, well, and you love the sea, dear?"

"Oh yes, dearly; I am a fisherman's daughter, you know, and Barclay and myself—that is Barclay holding on to a backstay—were always—always together in boats among the rocks, and—so——" She hung her head.

"And so you thought you shouldn't be parted?"

Captain M'Lean stopped on board for two whole hours, and all that time Antonio kept talking, and managed to give this kindly skipper an epitome of his marvellous adventures.

But Captain M'Lean's kindness was not merely of the verbal species.

He despatched a boat to his ship for fresh stores of almost every sort that would likely be of service, nor would he hear of payment or barter.

"You would do the same by me, I know," he said, "and God only knows how soon we ourselves may need assistance."

But before he went he accepted a pearl from Antonio, which he assured him he should have placed in a ring for his wife.

And then he gave Antonio his address, bidding him be sure and call whenever he could find his way down the romantic Clyde as far as Helensburgh.

Soon after this the ships parted, dipping ensigns as each went on his own way across the lonesome sea.

So now after their salt-water bath and a spell of walking in the morning sunshine, Barclay and Davie had a good breakfast to go down to, cooked and served up in Pandoo's best style. It is needless to add that they did justice thereto.

Yes, the voyage was indeed idyllic.

When the moon rose up of an evening and silvered the waters, while the gentle breeze blew cooler, and the stars shone bright and clear, our heroes, with Teenie, Sister Leona, and Antonio, sat together on the deck.

They talked of the future—oh, not the nightmare past—till at least five bells in the first watch, and every now and again Antonio's sad guitar was struck, and he sang songs of romantic Spain that enthralled and enchanted every one who heard them.

Teneriffe at last, after sighting several other most beautiful islands that hung like green or brown clouds twixt the blue sea and the horizon, which melted together, as it were, till you could not have told where the one ended and the other began.

It was five o'clock when the anchor was dropped, but before that time our boy heroes were on deck, and had had their bath, and were gazing in wonder

at the rugged beauty of this mountain isle. High above all the other mountains rose the lofty sugar-cone Peak of Teneriffe, high indeed above the clouds that rested on his giant breast and that caught the first pink rays of the morning sun.

But the sun had not yet risen, but had just begun to tinge the lower mountain peaks with opal and crimson, when Teenie herself came on deck with Sister Leona.

They were both dumb with delight. So grand a scene had never before been witnessed by them, nor such beautiful cloud effects, not only among the mountains themselves, but even far to the west.

Antonio went early on shore that day, taking with him Archie the mate, Teenie, Sister Leona, and Barclay.

"Now, dearies," he said to the latter three, "you go and enjoy yourselves all you can, while Archie and I go to engage fresh hands.

"Mind this though, the boat will leave for the ship at precisely five. Adios!"

And the weird wee kindly skipper waved his hand.

.

Just at this end of my ower true tale I have but little space to tell you of all the young folks did on this delightful day, and on this delightful island.

I shall tell you, however, one thing they did not do, they did not attempt the ascent of the giant peak.

The fatigue would have been far too great for Teenie and her companion, albeit horses take you high up into the mountain ranges.

But they went to Orotava, and marvelled at all the beauties of nature they saw on every side. The drive was truly charming, the trees, the flowers, and palms more lovely than anything on earth they had ever seen before.

There was here such a charming mixture of the tropical and temperate, of wildness with civilisation combined.

Barclay enjoyed it. And as to Teenie, wandering hand in hand through the wilds, after leaving the carriage, with the boy who was more than a brother to her, was all one delightful dream.

.
At sea again once more.

Less work to do though now, for Antonio has engaged six good seamen and true.

Britons every one they were, and right glad to be able once more to secure a passage to the shores of Merrie England.

.
Standing on the little pier at Fisherton one beautiful morning, with spy-glass in hand and a trusty companion by his side, Teenie's father rubbed his eyes, then rubbed the glass and scanned the horizon.

He could just raise the full-rigged fore-topmast of a stately ship standing in apparently for the shore.

"Shiver my gaff, Bill," he said, "if there ain't

the old *Zingara* or her ghost. I can't be mistaken in the cut of her jib."

"Let *me* have a squint.

"Ah! that is her for sure. I can raise her hull now, and why—why 's I live, if she haint got juries stepped, and fore and aft sails on each."

"Oh, this *is* a happy day," cried Mr. Norton. "Run up and tell t'ould parson, and send a boy to convey the jiful tidins to Mrs. Stuart and Miss Phœbe. If I don't run 'ome and tell my old woman that the *Zingara's* headin' straight for the bay, I'll bust up, so off I goes."

The news spread through the village like wildfire, and in half-an-hour's time there wasn't a boat that was not afloat and speeding off to meet the long-lost *Zingara*.

But Norton's boat, in which went Phœbe, outstripped them all, for he carried a press of canvas that caused her to skim across the water like a sea-gull.

When near enough to see his own little daughter standing in the bows beside Barclay, he simply lost all control of himself. He waved his red fisherman cap in the air, and shouted aloud for very joy, and the shout was taken up from boat to boat, and re-echoed even from the crowd around the shore itself.

But can I really be expected to describe or dwell over the joysomeness of that home-coming? There are some things that authors cannot do. And were

I to tell you how, after hugging Teenie in his arms, and kissing her hair and brow, the old man just managed to say—

“Bless the Lord for all His mercies,” then burst into tears—I should—why, I should make a baby of myself also, and—cry too.

CHAPTER XIV

BROTHER JOSÉ'S STORY, AND DAVIE DRAKE'S LITTLE JOKE

Two years have past and gone since that memorable day when the long-lost *Zingara* sailed into Fisherton Bay.

As far as Barclay, Davie, and Antonio are concerned, they have been eventful years.

Both our heroes have passed their examinations, and have been to India with Antonio, he himself acting as captain of the *Zingara*, and Davie and Barclay as mates.

But during the time the ship lay at Calcutta, Antonio was absent for two long months.

Two years, then, are past and gone, and the *Zingara* is once more on the eve of starting from Fisherton Bay.

But not for a long voyage, for—whisper, reader—this is a bridal tour.

The *Zingara* will cruise only during the sweet summer months along the shores of Spain, where a stay of some weeks will be made, that Antonio and his brother, so long a prisoner in the dungeon of the murdering priests of G——, may visit their

proudest acquaintances of the days of auld lang syne.

Yes, the brother is on board. Tall and spare is he, his hair as white as snow, but his complexion fair and young, while his voice is ever tender and quiet, and his smile a sad and chastened one. Oh, no one but himself can tell of the long years of suffering he has passed through.

Who else are on board?

Well, I must not hesitate to answer this question. Let the passengers muster by open list, as we say in the Navy, and present themselves according to age.

Mrs., or Madame Garcia, Antonio and José's mother. She is cheerful though old, cheerful and active, and not a day more aged-looking than the long-suffering José her son, whom she idolizes.

Parson Grahame comes next, looking resigned and happy. Maud, his dear little daughter, has been dead for years, but he knows she is in a better land. If you were to unwittingly ask him about Maudie, he would simply reply—

“Oh, didn't you know? God took dear wee Maud home.”

Dr. Parker might have been here. Alas! he is dead too.

Mrs. Stuart is too delicate, or fears the sea; but Phoebe is here, and very happy and pleased she looks.

Poor old plain-faced Norton the fisherman is sitting aft yonder, smoking his not over-aristocratic pipe.

Pandoo has just brought him a light, and Pandoo and he have waxed very friendly. At this moment he is telling the handsome Indian that "there be a many changes in this world o' sin and sorrer, but it'll all come right up-bye."

Now comes Antonio and his bride, Sister Leona, sister now no longer.

And last, but not least, surely the youngest, handsomest, and happiest couple ever seen on board ship—Barclay Stuart and Teenie, now *all* his own; and Parson Grahame married those two couples only this morning.

But the anchor is up, a delightful land breeze fills the sails, and away flies the *Zingara* on the wings of the wind. The flag is dipped again and again to the cheers of the good folks of Fisherton that crowd the pier and shore to throw blessings, rice, and old shoes on the water.

The blessings, let us hope, will take effect, the sea-gulls eat the rice, and the old shoes will sink.

.

Pandoo is still steward, but there is a good cook, and both young ladies have maids.

That first day's dinner was a happy one, and when seated on chairs in the moonlight, on the upper deck, Antonio told more of the wonderful adventures of the *Zingara* than Parson Grahame yet had heard.

"But now," said Davie Drake, "don't forget

your promise, sir, to tell us how you managed to free your brother from the power of those bloody-handed thugs and priests."

Antonio sat still for a minute or two, as if deep in thought. Then he played a few sad notes on the guitar. This, he used to say, always calmed his mind and toned his nervous system.

"Brother," he said at last, "let you and I tell the story together."

José's hand and Antonio's met in a brotherly clasp.

"Will you begin?"

"Let me be brief, then," said José; "my voice is still feeble from long confinement.

"We were younger then, Antonio, young, and perhaps a little wild. But after the city of L—— was recaptured, you and I, who were volunteers, did a little looting, as did the soldiers and their officers also.

"You will remember that dark night when a friendly native offered to conduct us to a blood-stained temple, from which he told us the priests had fled, and that the eyes in the idols were diamonds of the purest water; that, moreover, they were charms, and had the power of keeping off disease, and rendering the owner proof against death by violence?"

"Yes, and I shall never forget that fearful night, José."

"Well, Antonio, we gained access to the temple, and I had broken one idol, and taken out the glitter-

ing diamond that served as an eye in the forehead. I gave it to you till I went in search of another.

"I sent you," continued José, "outside to watch."

"And I never saw you more; and when the guide rushed out, he said he had seen you fall stabbed to the heart."

"I was stabbed, Antonio, but it was only through the arm.

"I was then stripped to the skin, but no diamond being found on me, I was condemned to be lashed, and confined in a loathsome dungeon, with barely rags enough to cover my lacerated and bleeding body.

"Centipeds and gecko lizards I could see about me in scores by the dim light that came from the narrow slit in the wall. There were scorpions too, and other loathsome, slimy things. Antonio, I will not harrow the feelings of these gentle ladies by describing all I suffered. God kept me alive, and now I hope to devote the years that may be left me to His service."

"Well, ladies and gentlemen," said Antonio, "when the *Zingara* returned, after her terrible adventures in the brown weedy Sea of Sargasso, my pearls and other things realised for me quite a large fortune. I sold all, for too well I knew the value money would be in enabling me to discover the hiding-place of my dear brother here, and delivering him from the hands of the priests.

"First I endeavoured to get the assistance of the

British Parliament. The few members I interviewed received me kindly, but were afraid they could do nothing to assist me.

"I determined, therefore, to act for myself, so when I got to India I repaired to L——.

"I am a fairly good actor, and no part suits me better than that of a Hindoo priest.

"I became one to all intents and purposes. From an Indian potentate, friendly to the British, and to whom I had done some services in the Mutiny times, I received an introduction to Hindoo priests at L——. Heaven forgive me for my deceit, but I carried it out so well, that I found favour everywhere, and was received even into the inner sanctuaries of the priests.

"At last I became a guest of the very men who had imprisoned my brother. This might have been called my third move, or third act, in the dangerous drama I was engaged in.

"My fourth was a more daring, but it was successful, for I bribed my brother's very jailer.

"About a week after this came the fifth and last act.

"Rhadda, the jailer, was to have ten thousand rupees and a free passage to Britain if he succeeded in smuggling my dear brother here beyond the gates of the temple, and coming, with me and him, to the British consul's house.

"He agreed. Such a sum seemed a fortune to him.

"Now the temple was far away in a wood in the suburbs, and to make successful pursuit impossible I had hired three fleet horses, and they would be in waiting at a certain rendezvous, where I with my brother and Rhadda would meet them at a particular hour late at night.

"But I had something else to do before this took place. I was to eat food with the priests that night, and drink so-called 'holy wine.' It was arrack pure and simple.

"However, I must devise a means of leaving their company so as not to excite suspicion.

"The 'holy wine' was never taken out till all the servants had salaamed and retired for the night."

Here Antonio smiled grimly.

"I made that 'holy wine' still more holy that evening," he said; "and scarcely had the priests partaken twice of it, ere they sank to sleep on their divans or mats, or even beneath the table.

"So far everything was satisfactory.

"But the servants constituted the danger. They slept on mats behind the doors or in the long corridors, so I determined to escape by the open window.

"I borrowed—well, perhaps it was theft—I stole, then, a long dark camels'-hair cloak to hide my white dress, and exchanged my turban for a little straw skull-cap.

"Next minute I was in the open air. And, José,

were you not astonished when your jailer came in and told you your brother had come, and that you were free?"

"I fainted dead away," said José. "But Rhadda was strong. He threw me across his shoulder, and soon I was in the open air. Oh, the gush of life and joy I felt now! But Rhadda carried me beyond the temple walls, and there—but you must finish the story, brother."

"Yes, I was at the rendezvous first.

"‘Great heavens!’ I exclaimed, ‘the horses have not come. All, all will be lost.’

"I saw Rhadda bearing you along.

"But just at that moment the sound of great gongs was heard all over the temple. These gongs were like wild beasts roaring for vengeance. I was missed, and my treatment of the priests was discovered.

"In a few minutes it would have been too late!

"Already shouting was heard within the walls.

"We were doomed to the torture and to death. The bush could not hide us long. But we were about to seek its friendly shelter, when to my intense joy the horses hove in sight, five in all, in charge of two natives.

"How the sight gladdened my heart!

"‘On, Rhadda, on,’ I cried, ‘and mount, José. I will follow.’

"Next moment, with sabres flashing in the starlight, two horsemen swept round the corner.

"My revolver broke the silence. Two men rolled

to the ground, two riderless horses dashed away into the night and the darkness.

“Next minute we were mounted and off.

“We never drew bridle till we reached the house of the consul, and there we had protection and freedom.

“Rhadda had his ten thousand rupees, and was seen safely on board a passenger steamer. I believe he is in England at this present moment.”

.

There is little more to tell the reader.

After the long delightful cruise down the Mediterranean, the *Zingara* and her people returned, and a right hearty welcome they all received from the good people of Fisherton.

Antonio Garcia did as he had always said he would. He retired from a sea life and built himself a beautiful house among the woods, and here he dwells with his wife, his old mother, and José.

There are beautiful gardens around it, and these are José's chief delight.

Antonio goes daily to his study in the old windmill, and the wild sea-birds seem to love him more than ever. Their screaming delights his ears, and brings him back dreams of days long past and gone.

Often he sleeps here all night, his faithful servant Pandoo seeing to his every wish and want. Then the wind howthing around the old windmill makes him think he is at sea once again, so his slumbers are sweet when the wind blows high.

Davie Drake is commander of an Atlantic liner or ocean greyhound.

Barclay Stuart is skipper of the trading ship *Zingara*, in which he had seen so many wild and strange adventures.

With Teenie by his side, then, like a true seaman he sails the wide world over.

But ever when he returns from a voyage his first visit is to Fisherton, to stay for a time with his mother and Phœbe, and visit Antonio and his wife every evening as certain as sunset.

One summer's day, while Antonio and his wife were in the beautiful and romantic upper room of the old windmill, there came soaring round and round among the other gulls one bird that appeared more timid than the others.

It alighted at last, however, and Antonio caught it gently.

He was about to let it fly away again when something attracted his attention.

"O dear Leona," he cried, "come here quickly. See, see the little quill."

Leona speedily snipped it off from the bird's leg with her scissors.

She looked at it, and her colour came and went.

"It is undoubtedly," she said, "one of the birds we despatched from the Sea of Sargasso."

"It really seems so," said Antonio. "It is sealed with red wax, too. Is it not truly marvellous?"

“Yes, indeed, dear.”

“But open it, Leona; open it.”

Leona snipped off one end, and shook out a tiny rolled scrap of paper.

“DEAR ANTONIO,” it read, “excuse a joke. But thinking to astonish you, I captured one of your half tame sea-gulls, and now I send him home. We are two hundred miles from land. Hope he’ll get back all right. All’s well.—Your bad boy,

“DAVIE DRAKE.”

THE END

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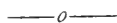
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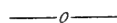
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